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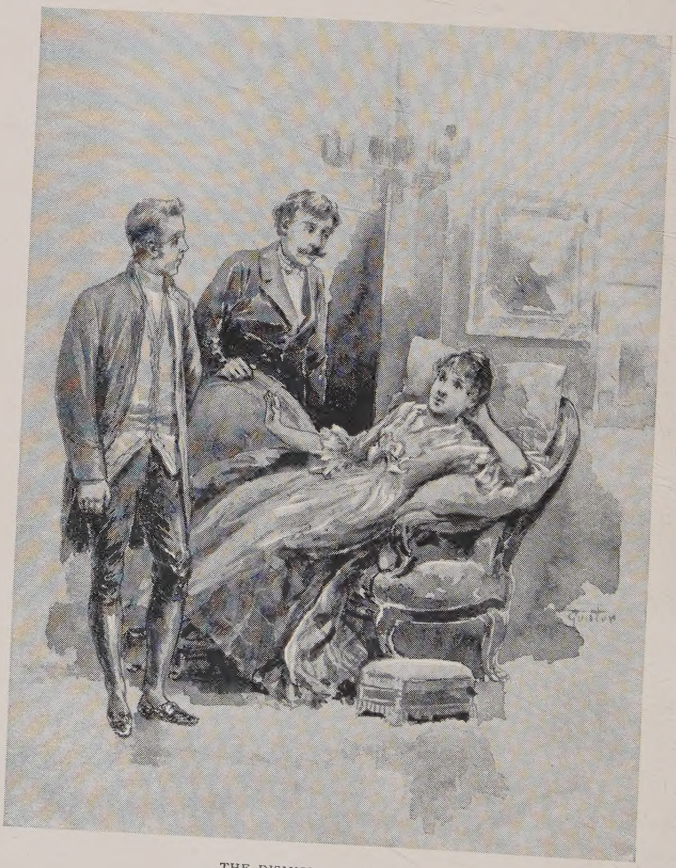

THE DISMISSAL OF CASAL.

WAS IT LOVE

BY

PAUL BOURGET

TRANSLATED BY CAMDEN CURWEN

ILLUSTRATED

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WAS IT LOVE?

I.

A CARRIAGE ACCIDENT.

"What great events from little causes spring!"

One warm and pleasant afternoon in the month of April, 1877, a brougham was about to round the corner of the Avenue d'Antin on its way to the Champs Elysées, when the horse took fright at a bicycle and bolted. The carriage veered in contact with the curb, one wheel came off, and it was overturned. Its occupant, the Countess de Candolle, "one of the prettiest women in Paris," as the papers say, escaped with a slight shaking and a severe fright. But her arrangements for the day were upset, and judging by the little white slate now lying at the bottom of the carriage with its former companions, a mother-of-pearl card-case and bijou travelling clock, her visiting-list had been a long one that particular afternoon. Gabrielle de Candolle's fair brow was clouded with a frown of vexation. So when she spoke to the footman, it was in tones of irritation, little like her usual speech.

"François, as soon as the horse is on its feet, leave that simpleton," pointing to the coachman, "to see to his handiwork, and go at once to the Rue Royale cab-stand. I shall want a victoria at Madame de Tillière's in less than half an hour."

Gabrielle turned and walked away. Her fairy-like bronzed boots were but ill-suited for the short walk to the Rue Matignon, where lived the lady whose name Gabrielle had just hurled at the unhappy François : and the countess was out of earshot before the footman, who stood looking conspicuously silly, could articulate a word.

Gabrielle thought only of the upsetting of her afternoon, with all its complicated plans.

"Idiot!" she muttered. "And on the very day of all the week when I was busiest! I wonder if Juliette is in. . . . If not, so much the worse for me. I must wait for her at her mother's. . . . I hope she is at home. It is ten days since I saw her last. I declare, in Paris there is no time to do anything one *wants* to do."

But, however vexed, the countess made the best of her way afoot, with her bright curls crowned by a little bonnet all bows and ostrich feathers, and in her tight-fitting gray satin ulster, that set off the charms of her supple figure to advantage. Nor was the average Parisian blind to the occasion. It was as good as a comedy to watch the actions of the passers-by. From the respectful way in which they dropped their eyes you might imagine they had not noticed her : but wait till the countess has passed! Once, twice, thrice, they crane their necks to note the gait and figure, the gown and bonnet of the aristocrat. And the women! How they follow her with their eyes! Let some psychologist explain the mystery of this attrac-

tion. It is magnetic, and is unmistakable. As for Gabrielle, she had but little need to look round to be aware of the "effect" she was producing. And let the man of mental science solve this further riddle: Why was the lady tickled with the idea that even the very humpback and the cripple were admiring her—Madame de Candolle, one of the *haute noblesse* of France? Not that in her own circle there was anything of the coquette about Gabrielle. She had just escaped from a real danger; her new brougham, sent for all the way to London, was no doubt a wreck; a valuable horse, the best in the stable, probably ruined for life. It was enough to vex an angel, and yet she was profoundly conscious of the secret stir her appearance was making, even pleased by it. Such are the contrarieties of human nature.

And so the frown had left her forehead by the time the charming "Saint"—for so her devoted friend Juliette sometimes playfully called her—lifted her neatly gloved hand to the old-fashioned knocker of the quiet mansion in the Rue Matignon. She had tasted the genuine pleasure, dear, perhaps, not less to saints than womankind, of the assurance that she was outrageously pretty; and now she stood within the stained-glass porch, awaiting news of her dear friend, more with the placid air of one who has been listening to sweet music than the startled face of one who has but just emerged from danger. Perhaps her smiles were owing to the news that Madame de Tillière had not gone out. To find a confidante so soon, to whom one might relate the ins and outs of a distressful accident, was almost to turn the accident into a thing of joy. And as Gabrielle tripped across the sunlit court to join her friend, she murmured pleasantly:

"Yes, I am sure that Juliette will be more frightened than I was myself."

Though scarcely a dozen years have passed away since the events that followed this unexpected visit, how many people are there left, even in the sphere of the De Candolles, who remember the lovely and rather mysterious woman whom Gabrielle was glad to call her "bosom friend," and to acknowledge as her spiritual sister? It will not, then, be out of place for us to paint her portrait in a dozen words; for Juliette, even by her friend's acquaintances, was not intimately known in the days of the long ago—and since then has disappeared.

Modest, reserved, even to the low-water mark of self-effacement, Madame de Tillière was one of those who, though in the world, are not entirely of it; one of those who exert as much diplomacy to be allowed to live a quiet life as rivals employ in the effort to shine and reign a little while society's mock queens. For outward symbol of her nature and index of her taste, what more appropriate than the quaint old mansion, on whose carved stone porch now falls the aristocratic silhouette of Gabrielle? An atmosphere of solitude seemed to surround this ancient house, cut off, as it was, from other habitations by a spacious garden.

If it is in the nature of things that the world has already forgotten this sweet woman, to make up for it her *friends*, by no means numerous, still cherish her dear memory with a warmth the years cannot change. To the worldly mind which pauses to ask why one of the loveliest women of '77 was content to pass her life in a kind of eclipse, those who are even yet her friends respond: "*Ah! she had suffered so!*"—pronouncing her name as that of

one whose tragedy was all too deep and sacred for the common ear. The catastrophe which had made Juliette a widow justified, in part, this explanation of her character. The Marquis Roger de Tillière, her husband of three months, one of the most brilliant captains on the French staff, was killed in July, 1870, by the side of General Douay, by one of the very first shots fired in that disastrous campaign. The news, announced by telegram to the marquise, threw her into a state of lethargy dangerous equally to mind and body, from which she did not rally for a month. Was not this reason enough for her remaining broken-hearted? Yet however terrible and strange the happenings of life, they create no new material in our natures, save as they influence complexities of character. Thus left with her freedom and a fortune at the early age of twenty, Madame de Tillière and her mother chose to live in calm seclusion. With their two hundred thousand francs a year, it was evident these ladies had no intention of being swallowed in the fashionable mob that circulates in cliques and clatter round those twin idols, Mammon and Astarte. Some instinct froze these ladies in their tracks; and heedful of every point of true hospitality, they became artists in friendship —and their house the very shrine of sociality for those who had the *entrée*. To individualize, to be refined, to be particular—such was their charming custom, both in love and friendship, and in externals, too. To them the world was an interpretation, not a tyranny. But were they altogether happy? That was their own business, not society's. Thus, in course of time, the presence of these ladies in the *salons* of the great became a sort of favor. In all this there was some danger of these two becom-

ing artificial in their loneliness. But their society was infinitely attractive. To this day, should you meet the painter Félix Mirant, old General de Jardes, Monsieur d'Avançon, diplomatist of the old school, or Ludovic Accragne, past prefect, and dwell, in confidence, on certain themes which, however remotely, serve to remind them of the sweet lady of the Rue Matignon, you will certainly hear them interpose with:

"Ah! if you had only known Madame de Tillière;" or,

"That was a man you would be certain *not* to meet at Madame de Tillière's!" or,

"There was only one woman I ever knew—and that was Madame de Tillière—who——"

And so on. But do not notice them too much; or they will put on a rather oracular look, and turn to another subject. It would seem as if these men really learned "how to talk" at the dear old receptions in the Rue Matignon. How else could they possibly give you, at this distance of time, such a scintillating word-picture of the grand woman who once was Juliette de Tillière? And of her charm? To call up the spirit of Juliette, it will be easiest to go to Madame de Candolle, if she will talk to you about her—which is seldom, for "the Saint" dreads to ponder on the memory of Juliette with a fear that is born of remorse. When the mind is in a state of tension, it is difficult to dissociate ourselves from the cause of certain evils that have happened to our friends: albeit we were only the innocent instrument of chance. Often and often the high-spirited Gabrielle will sigh to herself: "If we had never seen each other on that April day! If I had not called in the Rue Ma-

tignon! If my brougham had not broken down!" Is it blind chance, or is it destiny, that oftentimes the weal or woe of an entire life will turn upon a word of information, a card of introduction—upon a train that we have failed to catch, upon a talk that we enjoyed one day "we met by accident"?

Accident, chance, destiny, or Providence—it is certain that, as Madame de Candolle stood in the sunny porch, none of these complex ideas troubled that golden head or followed her through the larger reception-room on her way to the snug boudoir where Juliette was in the habit of receiving.

Madame de Tillière was writing at a davenport in the angle of a bay-window commanding a view of the garden. Lilac and pink hawthorn were all in bloom; the scene was an epitome of peace. As soon as she saw Madame de Candolle she rose, with a little glad cry of surprise, and folded her in her arms.

"Look, dear!" she said, "I am all ready, dressed, and waiting for the carriage. I was just going to your house to get the news."

"Where you would *not* have found me," responded the Countess, "nor anybody who was able to inform you that you might have never seen poor me again in *this* world!"

"You are romancing?"

"No, I assure you. I have but just escaped a great danger."

"Why do you frighten me?"

Then Gabrielle began to tell the tale, a little bit exaggerated, of the carriage accident; and Juliette punctuated the story with inarticulate cries of terror. It was a

pretty nest for such a pair of friends, as the afternoon sun shone in with the splendor of pleased April, and the cheery wood-fire crackled on the brass andirons. By a touch of spiritualism that seemed well-suited to her charming person, Juliette had had this boudoir of her own fitted up with the entire contents of a Louis XVI. saloon, removed from Nançay, dating from the day when the castle was restored by an ancestor of Juliette's, Charles de Nançay, the friend of Rivarol. The grey-white tints of these old-fashioned pieces of furniture, magnificently carved, the silvery *nuances* of the old silks with which they were upholstered, blended with the fading pigments of the family portraits in their heavy gold frames. It seemed Juliette had a good idea that these survivals of a gracious antiquity would harmonize very well with her peculiar style of beauty—and she was not mistaken. With a cloud of powder on those blond locks of hers, a little rouge upon her cheeks, a tiny patch of jet plaster at one corner of her mouth, high-heeled red slippers on her feet, and a Marie Antoinette robe upon her gentle figure, Juliette might have passed as a cousin of the celebrated Laura de Nançay, whose portrait was over the chimney-piece, side by side with that of the Marquis Charles. Even without the illusion of patch and powder, she bore a startling likeness to her great-grandmother, so unworthily rewarded for a romantic passion—in the long ago—by a scathing passage in the Mémoires of Tilly. In Juliette, as in this ancestress, the sweet childishness of expression, as of a choice but fragile Dresden statuette, was corrected and adorned by a certain depth of gaze and a slight sadness of smile. At times, when there was something going on that moved her, though she might not wish to seem ex-

cited, her pupils would dilate, and Juliette's blue eyes became nearly black, giving one the impression of an almost morbid sensibility, controlled by a strong will.

Juliette's face, thoroughbred and speaking thus of feelings and of passions pent within, contrasted with Madame de Candolle's,—equally patrician, but the index of an energetic spirit and of action. The latter was a picture by Van Dyck "dressed" by Worth; the former an old-time pastel by Doucet. When these two had finished tattling of the mutual happenings of their last ten days, scraps of news about society and visitors, came the inevitable invitation.

"When will you come to dinner, dear, to have a *real, long* talk? Why not to-morrow?" said the Countess.

"To-morrow, no," said Juliette. "My cousin from Nançay is coming. But the *next* day?"

"Thursday? I am not free. I have to dine with Sister d'Arcole. Will you come on Friday?"

"It is a 'fixture,'" cried Juliette, laughing. "I dine with the Avançons. Fancy *me*, a peacemaker in the house of my old worshipper! Luckily, his wife goes to bed at an unearthly hour, and if it is your opera night, and you have nobody better to share your box——"

"Not a soul. Better? I will come for you to the Avançons', at nine o'clock. But it is an age to Friday! I have an idea. Why should you not come to me this very evening?"

"Look at this letter, scarcely dry!" exclaimed Juliette. "I have written to Mirant, who has been begging for an evening ever so long, and as we were alone——"

"You will not post the letter!—that is all. Oblige me!

This dinner to-night will be a *task* without you. It is a hunting-party, you know. Prosny, D'Artelles, Mosé, and then"—with hesitation at her lips—"and *then*—a man that perhaps you would hardly like to meet. You know, *chérie*, you *are* so what the English call 'particular.'"

"And the French '*prude*,'" put in Juliette, smiling. "And all because I don't care to come and dine with you amid the hurly burly. But who is this mysterious personage to whom I am painted as objecting so to be presented?"

"Oh! not so *very* mysterious," laughed the Countess. "Only Raymond Casal."

"The Casal of Madame de Corcieux?" asked Juliette; and after an affirmative nod:

"The fact is," said Gabrielle, "that Monsieur Poyanne would disapprove! I should not escape the question: 'Why does Madame de Candolle keep such people on her visiting list?'"

It was clear that this friend, about whose surveillance Gabrielle rallied Juliette, was no favorite of the Countess. As if encouraged by her own enjoyment of the fun, she went on with a mocking laugh:

"Tell him, anyway, my love, that Casal is more my husband's friend than mine. And—will you let me speak my mind? 'Casal' signifies, no doubt, for you, for Monsieur Poyanne, and for many more, a wicked fellow, who only seeks a woman's company to do her wrong; a fop who has compromised Madame de Corcieux, and Madame Ethorel, and others 'a thousand and three'; a gambler for the wildest stakes; a mere animal, who passes from the gaming table to the fencing-school, from luncheon to the stable, and finishes the day 'drunk as a

lord.' Isn't that a picture of *your* Casal, and of your De Poyanne's Casal?"

"*My* Casal!" cried Juliette. "I know him not. And 'my Poyanne'—not that. I won't be held responsible for the antipathies of my acquaintances!"

"Yes, '*your* Poyanne,'" persisted Gabrielle. "Look you: if Poyanne was a widower, instead of living merely separate, and that—*wife* of his were to do him the favor of dying in Florence——"

"Go on!" said Juliette.

"I always think that you would be willing to marry him; and as for Poyanne, I will wager he would jump at the chance, because he mounts guard already over you with all the airs of a betrothed."

"Nevertheless, I don't imagine he nurses such a prospect," cried Juliette, with a merry laugh; "and if the case were to come before me, I am sure I don't know what my sentence would be; and even if it were so, a *fiancée* of twenty-seven years of age and some odd months is perfectly capable of warding off the terrible charms of a 'man of the world,' who is at one and the same time a bit of a fop, a good deal of a gambler, very much of a jockey, almost a fencing-master, and not a little of the drunkard—for isn't that the correct likeness of your guest?"

"You cut me short just as I was going to tell you that such a myth is no more like Raymond Casal than our poor Napoleon the Third was like the tyrant limned by Hugo. Is it Raymond Casal's fault that he has succumbed, more than once, to the facile charms of a designing woman? You have good cause to smile! Was it Pauline or he that made the echoes ring? All that I know is, he has

never spoken a sinister word to *me*, or given *me* a doubtful look, and that he is extremely talented, extremely witty, full of strange experiences in India, China, Australasia, the States—the world! Man of pleasure! Gambler! He is a little better off than the others, and not quite so secretive. He owns more horses, made more bets, and lost more money. Here's a budget to make a fuss about. I don't deny he fences—very *well*. But he never boasts about it, and I have not yet heard of his running any of his friends through the body. It is possible he drinks; but, seriously, he has always had the good sense to come under my eyes conspicuously sober. Do you know what this man really is? A spoilt child to whom the world has been too good. Yet he has kept a thousand charming qualities. And with it all. . . . But you have seen him for yourself?"

"I think somebody once pointed him out to me at the Opera," said Juliette; "a big man with dark hair and a tawny beard."

"It must have been a long, long time ago. He has only a mustache now," said the Countess. "How very odd, this Paris life of ours! I should have thought you must have met a hundred times."

"I go about so little," said Juliette; "nor do I notice every one I chance to see."

"Well, dear, you must come out to-night to visit me, and you will notice *our* Casal. It *is* to be?"

"Perhaps. But how you run away with words! If I did not know you well enough to——"

"If you did not know me well enough, you would vow I was in love with 'our Casal'—isn't *that* what you mean? What would you have, my love? I am a soldier's daugh-

ter, and I loathe the want of logic and injustice of the world. And so I fight against it. You will denounce me to Poyanne?"

"Still harping on Poyanne?" Juliette shrugged her shoulders.

"Still harping on Poyanne. Because, when he is out of mind, we two are happy. And when he talks to you, I know so well it takes effect. But some one's coming. It is the carriage that I ordered."

Listen to the pretty babbling of "Good-by, good-by!" as the footman announces the Countess's victoria; the "So soon," and the "You have been here only five minutes;" the "I must go, indeed," and "Till this evening, dear, good-by again!" And then to the sister-kisses; and then the rippling laughter at the name of Casal whispered once again; and then, when Gabrielle is really gone, the gentle tick-tack of the ormolu clock on the mantel, and the rustle of the burning oak-logs on the hearth.

All alone Juliette sits forward to her desk, and tears up the note of invitation to the painter Mirant; then she takes a large, official-looking sheet of paper from a drawer, and twists her pen between her fingers, as those do who find it hard to begin a letter, looking off into the garden, now less beautiful because the sky is overclouded, till at last she finds it in her to begin. And this is how the letter read:

"DEAR COUNT: Please do not call to-night till ten o'clock. Gabrielle has just this minute gone out. I had not seen her for ten days, and was obliged to tell her I would dine with her to-night. Do not scold me for keeping you waiting two hours over your time to tell me how you spoke in the Chamber of Deputies,

and what took place there. And do not come with your eyes cast down to reproach me silently, and so untruly, with my worldliness. You know too well what all the world would be to me without you.

"JULIETTE."

And when she had sealed the despatch she wrote the name of a well-known orator of the Right upon the envelope, a man who had played a part at Versailles analogous to that which M. de Mun fills in the Chamber to-day—Henry de Poyanne.

All which shows that the most intimate friends very often indulge in only semi-confidences, and proves, as a modern cynic says, that if you want the whole truth you must go to those who owe you some small grudge. Since, if Madame de Candolle suspected, as we have seen, that De Poyanne cared for Juliette, she was a thousand miles from thinking that the feeling was reciprocal. For it was impossible to read the placid tribute at the close without concluding that the politician held the foremost place, in all sincerity, in the sweet widow's sentiments. One might also read between the lines an excuse in advance, as indeed was meant, for Juliette's frowardness in persisting in seeing what "our Casal" was like. Would not Poyanne, who this day was to take a prominent part in an important debate, be rather scandalized if he knew that the woman of his heart had not only put off meeting him with a rather frivolous excuse, but was actually going to dine side by side with a man he thought he had the best of reasons to despise? Juliette had not told Gabrielle that several times, especially on behalf of Pauline de Corcieux, Poyanne had spoken of Casal in terms of absolute disgust. Had she looked her own writing in the face she might have discovered the signs of incipient

rebellion against the authority of Henry de Poyanne. And then she might have stood aghast at the thought that the step from incipient rebellion to open rupture is quite an easy one; and so she might not have sent the letter, and not have gone to dine with Madame de Candolle; and then she might have never met Casal, and this story would not have been written, for the life of Juliette de Tillière would have been entirely different. But when we write to those we care for it is seldom that we analyze our sentences; and, even if we tried to, we might fail, sometimes, to catch our own inner meanings. Thus lightly are the threads of our destinies woven from the cobwebs of light words; and half an hour later, when Juliette stopped her carriage in the Rue Montaigne to put the letter with her own hands into the box, she little thought that with it all her future was slipping through her well-gloved fingers, any more than Gabrielle dreamed, when she pressed her friend to meet Casal, she was pronouncing on the lovely widow a harsher sentence than immediate execution.

II.

A NEW FRIEND.

"For curiosity the child
Snatches at that or this;
Till, by a butterfly beguiled,
It oversteps the abyss."
—*Anon.*

MADAME DE TILLIÈRE had a pretty way, when she knew she was going out to dinner, of finishing her toilet in advance, so as to be on hand to wait on her mother at dinner, even if she could not share the meal. Madame de Nançay was in the daily habit, in accordance with thirty years of country life, of sitting down to table at 6:45 to the minute. The dining-room on the first floor, large enough to seat a dozen persons comfortably, was common to the two. Madame de Nançay worshipped her beautiful Juliette, and the latter was equally proud of her mother—sentiments by no means too common in every-day families—so that the whole house had been arranged, and daily usages detailed, in order that their lives should flow on gently side by side where they might not commingle. The elder lady had her own reception-room, her own servants, and kept her even tenor independently of Juliette; winter or summer up at six o'clock, frost, rain, dark, or shine, so as to attend mass at the neighboring convent; with equal regularity to bed

at nine P.M.; seldom descending to the ground-floor. It was her wish that her daughter should be free as air in all her ways and movements, yet in part protected by a mother's benevolent presence. With admirable self-abnegation, Madame de Nançay would hardly allow her daughter to spoil her by waiting at table so assiduously every time Juliette went out to dinner or to a reception. When first, three years before our story opens, Henry de Poyanne began to pay his court to Juliette, how many excuses had he not invented to come and feast his world-weary eyes on the spectacle of such a mother waited on by such a daughter—the last in grandest evening costume, crowned with jewels as a daybreak lily with dewdrops; the other evermore in sombre black; the serenity of the dear old home illumined by two ancient silver lamps, the semi-silences of love a benediction on the lonely widow's simple meal.

This evening Madame de Tillière wore a dress of rose-colored satin, festooned and subdued by draperies of black lace. In her ears and amidst her waving, delicate light-brown hair, with just a little glint of gold in it, shone speckless pearls. Her corsage just lent to sight the fair lines of a rather slender bust, and revealed the statuesque neck poised on shoulders that would have graced a water-nymph. In Juliette one beheld the beauty of a woman and a girl at once. As she waited on Madame de Nançay, now filling her glass with wine and water, now peeling a pear for her, or playfully sharing a saucerful of fruit and milk, her delicate white arms and small hands were seen at their best, had there been anybody except her own dear mother to behold. Brighter than ever the daughter's blue eyes shone with her task of love, betraying none of

those deep-sea flashes that were wont to gleam under the influence of emotions of less simplicity. Her mother reflected, as beloved ones will, the glow of Juliette's expression.

With a returning interest in the affairs of society, Madame de Nançay told herself that if Juliette was occasionally really pleased to be away from home, it was not so very impossible that some day or other she might remarry. Quite soon, the poor old mother thought, at any rate in no long time, it was in nature that her lovely daughter would be left alone with the universe. With this on her mind, Madame de Nançay, in the high, clear tones of those whom age has deafened, said to Juliette:

"I almost have it in my heart to be jealous of Gabrielle, so much do you rejoice over the thought of meeting her. And what company will there be this evening to meet my Juliette?"

"Not many, mother," said she, feeling a guilty little blush already on her cheeks, though none was there. "A few hunting men belonging to De Candolle's set. It is to keep her in countenance that Gabrielle has begged me not to fail her."

"Ah! my child, perhaps it is the bad example of that distracted household that prevents you from remarrying," said Madame de Nançay, shaking her head, and then sadly: "Poor little woman, so good, so brave, and neither chick nor child to sustain her tender heart in her trouble."

"So good, so brave," assented Juliette, with a sigh that was almost a sob, at the thought of her dear friend's hopeless trouble; her eyes dim with indignation at the thought. Louis de Candolle, before his marriage, had

been in love with a certain Madame Bernard. Not many months after his union with Gabrielle he renewed the acquaintance, and had flaunted it almost in the eyes of society, certainly in those of his long-suffering wife, who, for the sake of the family name, in pride of long descent, was unwilling to make a public scandal of the ungentle conduct of her husband. So heroically did she carry out this haughty resolution that one item of these intertwined lives will show the nobility of Gabrielle: the money that kept up their state was hers, not his; nor would she contemplate this unkind husband being reduced to beg of an outraged wife. And Madame de Candolle trusted that some day there might come a son to sustain the grand old name to which she was romantically devoted. Besides, she loved her husband still. Madame de Tillière was acquainted with this dark family history; she had heard enough from Gabrielle's lips to be able to sympathize with the bitterness of her married life.

Completing the chain of her mother's ideas, she said: "I do not fancy I should show such patience!"

"Child, I was wrong to bid you think of such sad things. I cannot bear to see your face grow cold. Gladden your mother with your prettiest smile again, and we will talk of something else. What were we saying? I had not seen my little one so gay for months!" . . .

"My darling mother!" thought Juliette later in the evening, as the carriage whirled her to the Rue de Tilsitt, "*how* she loves, *how* she loves me! And how well she reads my soul! For it is true this dinner at Gabrielle's interests me as much as though I were a six-year child escorted to my birthday party. I wonder—wonder why it is!" . . .

Yes; why?

Ten minutes—say, for instance, the ten minutes that separate the Rue de Tilsitt from Rue Matignon—had often sufficed Juliette for the analysis of every little thing observed in an entire evening. But on this occasion it seemed as if hours instead of minutes would hardly have been long enough to disentangle the very cat's-cradle of emotions that had twisted up her thoughts since the talk with Gabrielle de Candolle. Though Juliette's reflections were usually bright and to the point, to-night she seemed unable to explain her own imaginings.

But it was with outward composure that Juliette stepped out at the De Candolles', and ordered the carriage to return at a quarter to ten, prompt. With the same unmoved visage she faced the assembled company, and even when Casal had been singled out by name for introduction, it was impossible to aver that Madame de Tillière took any special notice of the man for whose sake alone she had accepted the unexpected invitation. As for Raymond Casal, he bowed to Juliette with apparently equal indifference—so much so that Gabrielle, who had been busily overlooking their bearing, came to the conclusion that Juliette's coldness was due to something that Poyanne had said.

"Well, and how do you like him?" she asked her friend, as soon as they could get together.

Juliette answered with a smile: "He's not so very—Oh! a good-looking man enough—of whom there are *so many*."

"I told you in advance he was not your style, dear," answered Gabrielle; "but I warn you, he sits next to

you at table. If you don't desire his company, there is still time to change."

"What is the use?" said Juliette, gracefully inclining her head.

Casal knew very well the contrast that existed between his appearance and his reputation—a matter at which Gabrielle had more than hinted when she first lifted the curtain for Juliette. His complexion was that pink pallor which no sitting up at cards could alter now, no buffeting of winter winds out hunting heighten; his hair, cut rather short, still curled becomingly over his square forehead, and still was raven-black, except at the temples, where it grew now more sparsely. The one deep furrow on his brow gave a look of revery, and in his somewhat drooping eyelids seemed to dwell an undefined sadness. His eyes themselves were of that greenish-gray one often sees in men of power, and they had the penetration that commonly goes with it. A straight nose and a solidly rounded chin completed this slightly furrowed mask of a sinister Apollo: for the undue fulness of the lips was half-hidden beneath a mustache more nearly blond than brown. Casal's was a face at once prematurely old and ridiculously young; at one and the same time languid and energetic, sensual and metaphysical; but there was one thing you could not say, that there was anything commonplace in its expression. To sum up, Casal's *ensemble* was at the same time powerful yet pretty, manly yet vaguely effeminate, and served to explain to Madame de Tillière how it was that in a world of caprice and frivolity he had inspired so many with an almost tragic passion, and why so many men, including Henry de Poyanne, cherished a particular antipathy for him.

"But I am sure he is not '*like so many*,'" was the stray blossom of thought Juliette newly watered, as, a quarter of an hour afterward, she stole a lightning glance at her new friend. Are you aware that a woman scarcely needs to look twice at you in order to tell "what you are like," and to the letter? They know the color of your eyes and the quality of your teeth, the form of your hands and the sit of your hair, the meaning of your movements and the source of your gestures, the soundings of your humor and the amount of your education, long before you even guess that they have "taken stock," in fact, with, as the word goes, "half an eye."

Dinner being announced, De Candolle offered Juliette his arm to pass into the dining-room: and we may fitly give a short description of the guests. Gabrielle's sister had been married to the Duc d'Arcole—the latter had joined the majority. She was tall, lethargic, dark, not the least like Gabrielle. The Vicomte de Prosny was a descendant of a Napoleonic marshal; Casal himself only the son of a railway king. Louis de Candolle, whose family had been a noble one for generations, had a passion for "*la grande chasse*," and, considerable as was his wife's fortune, it was necessary for him, in order to satisfy this hereditary taste to the full, and entertain the best families of France, to take into partnership, so to speak, certain chosen members from his club. It was thus that Alfred Mosé, the banker—Moses, had he lived two generations ago—was sitting at the rather exclusive table of Gabrielle de Candolle. Mosé's guiding thought was how to lead a fashionable life. Five years before, with unparalleled diplomatic efforts, he had succeeded in being pitch-forked into the Jockey Club, and was only too glad to be taken

up as an acquaintance by Louis de Candolle and his aristocratic wife, at the cost of heavy subscriptions to the Pont-sur-Yonne Hunt. Gabrielle was able to moderate the anti-Semitic spleen of certain guests by pointing out the admirable discretion and gentlemanly tone of Alfred Mosé, and his unquestionably practical benevolence. A fair, pale man of fifty, with perfect manners, Mosé was a fine example of the Jewish force of character —which generally attains its end, whether the object be a million or an invitation to some exclusive social function. Monsieur d'Artelles, a faded fop of the era of the Third Napoleon, completed this little party.

If any one had whispered Madame de Candolle that it was hardly the right or even correct thing to place her young friend next to Raymond at the table, she might have felt affronted ; and so might Juliette if the "*Diable Boiteux*" of Le Sage and De Guevara had entered then and there with an insinuation that her feigned indifference for her near neighbor, momentarily increasing, only cloaked an interest in him that waxed more vivid every instant.

Prosny and D'Artelles were engaged in discussing the excellent Amontillado. Mosé lisped graceful little nothings to Madame d'Arcole ; and the matter-of-fact master of the house consoled himself by a liberal enjoyment of the pleasures of his extremely well-kept table.

The conversation naturally drifted to the carriage accident of the morning ; and then, particularly as it was the dead season, the talk of the gentlemen ran to the most extraordinary sporting anecdotes that they could think of.

"Do you recollect, D'Artelles," cried Prosny, "that astonishing *battue* with the Grand Dukes at the Cross

Saint-Joseph? How many birds do you reckon we killed that day?"

"Three thousand," answered D'Artelles; "and I could have added another thirty per cent. easily, but I ran out of cartridges."

"You gave your gun a needed rest, at any rate," said Mosé. "The other day La Môle laid up his 'Purdey' with hard work."

"Ah! there's a shot for you, La Môle," exclaimed De Candolle.

"How can you talk of La Môle—a very poor second-fiddle to Strabane?" cried Prosny.

"I wish you could have seen him," insisted the host, "kill six grouse on a bee-line, two on the rise, two more *au coup de roi*, and the other two behind his back."

"*Parbleu!*" smiled Mosé. "Every morning of his life he used to exercise before a looking-glass, taking up three guns one after another from his man-servant without removing either for more than a fifth of a second from his shoulder."

"Then," cried D'Artelles, who with plebeian taste was in the habit of going off by himself into a corner to shoot, "he must have had at least two men dangling at his heels in the field—and you call that *sport!*"

Madame d'Arcole took in this conversation, a thousand times familiar to her, with the Italian phlegm she drew from her mother, whom she resembled as much as Gabrielle was unlike her. Juliette complimented her friend on the magnificent flowers that flooded the table—huge nodding bunches of fresh white lilac, pink and yellow roses, orchids with their hearts of violet velvet lapt in a dainty robe of curious mauve. Round the great cut-glass

vases was ranged a miniature hedge of Russian violets. A hundred wax lights, shielded from the breeze of the half-open windows by shades of softest azure, illuminated the modish scene, lambent with snowy napery and the glow of silver *figurines* upholding the sumptuous bouquets, whose supernal fragrance, mingling with the scent of rare wines, intoxicated the senses. To amalgamate all these things with effective artifice not only demanded wealth, but perfect taste; and Gabrielle had both.

As Juliette began her remarks about the loveliness of the white lilac and twining orchids, Casal lifted his eyes. His fair neighbor, by one of those coincidences that are so common when there have been spells of silence, took, as it were, the words out of his mouth. Casal set himself to consider Juliette more attentively than since their presentation.

It was soon clear to his practised eye that Madame de Tillière's mind was just then in a state of sustained agitation. He was enabled so to conclude from the *brusquerie* and *bizarrerie* of the ideas that she gave tongue to in her conversation with De Candolle and with Gabrielle; as for himself, she never turned her face toward him. And this acute observer did not fail to note a certain trembling of the lips in Juliette, a certain quiver of the eyelids, as though she prayed her eyes might not betray the secrets of her brain. He came to two defined conclusions: the one, that behind this pretty screen of blond hair, azure eyes, and pink and white complexion, Madame de Tillière hid an explosive brilliancy of soul, and multitudinous longings no sooner framed than trampled under foot; the second, that there was even then seated at table somebody in whom she was extremely interested. In a

minute more he had "reckoned up" these four men. Was it De Candolle, a "nobody"? No. She spoke to him freely and gayly. . . . D'Artelles? The Baron was on the "down track" years ago. . . . Prosny? This big gourmand of a vicomte boasted long since that he was "out of it." Mosé? Hardly. Madame d'Arcole, with whom he was now engaged in a *tête-à-tête*, and whom he had been courting "officially" for months, had not once exchanged with Juliette one of those lightning flashes of defiance that jealous women, however circumspect in all else, by no possible grace ever spare their rivals. . . . Who was there left, except *Casal himself?* In spite of his successes—rather, perhaps, in virtue of them—Raymond was neither very vain nor very modest. He believed, he knew, that he was capable of inspiring love, and at first sight. But he knew also that it was always on the cards that he might displease a woman to the verge of antipathy; and he even admitted—which proves that he carried his good sense, for once, a little too far—that as yet she was scarcely conscious of more than his existence. It all depended, he reflected, on the lady herself, and on the present condition of her heart. What crises, what fevers of affection had she passed through in life, and how many were yet to be suffered? This was a kind of cross-examination upon which the teachings he had chanced on regarding the enchanting widow threw but little light. As, for instance:

"Madame de Tillière is a charming woman, distinguished, though of simple manners."

"Hang it, my good fellow, the relict of the late lamented T. is an intolerable *poseuse*."

Or again: "There are, nevertheless, a few good women

in the world. For example, Madame de Tillière. Did you ever hear she had a 'follower'?"

Or, "Pshaw! she is only one of those women who cover up their game better than the rest of them."

"If it is really I, Casal, that am upon her mind," thought he, after these reflections, "it is a fair fencing match, and I must watch my friend the enemy's eye."

It was the wisest thing, because no doubt Madame de Tillière had heard him severely handled by the common tongue. He knew too well exactly how he stood to doubt it. Let him, then, take a back seat for the time, and play a waiting game of tact and fine discretion—that was his instinct, as of most men who succeed in interesting many women. He continued this play of self-effacement, denying himself his customary airs of *enfant gâté;* posing as a listener rather than a talker, and holding himself in reserve like a secretary of embassy of the old school. He had not long to wait for the fruits of this abstention. Juliette, who of her own free will had joined this party in order to study the man who was now sitting at her side, was beginning to fear that dinner would be over without her having had a chance to find out what there was behind this physiognomy that so strongly magnetized her. It was Juliette who suddenly turned to her neighbor, and asked a question calculated to make him enter into conversation.

"You can believe me or not, as you like," Prosny was just saying, already heated by champagne and sherry, and giving forth his *quotum* of incredible anecdotes, "but I knew a fellow in Normandy that would bag his twenty brace a day without fingers, hands, or arms. Yes, gentlemen! his youngest son used to load his gun for him,

place his father on a stile, or on a stock or mile-stone, and the dear old boy blazed away *with his toes.* And hardly ever missed a bird!"

The entire party went out on strike against this partridge story, and Prosny was emphasizing its truth with his fat fore-finger, when Juliette turned to Casal, and said:

"You, too, monsieur, have you no eccentric histories of sport to cap the recitations of these worthy gentlemen?"

"If I have not, madame," he answered, smiling, "the reason is that there are only a certain number of sporting stories in the French language, *and they have all been told!* All the same, I wasn't acquainted with the conundrum Prosny has just given us; and I must say it is a long way ahead of the rest. But one must have a little charity for hunting stories, when we think that the love of sport represents the sane and wholesome side of our complicated and artificial lives."

"I declare I am not exactly able to see," answered Juliette, "where the sanity and wholesomeness comes in of a man posting himself behind a hedge for six or seven hours at a stretch, to let off a couple of ounces of cold lead every now and again at an unhappy hare or harmless pheasant, which the keepers have been *scat*-ting at you all the morning!"

"Oh, that sort of hunting," laughed Casal, "does well enough for a beginning. One pursues the higher branches, which require more skill, afterward; and I have seen some of my friends—not many—begin by shooting rabbits and get as high as tiger-potting in India, buffalo-bagging in the Western States, or hippopotamus-hunting

in Central Africa. Will you believe me, madame, that three of my particular friends had the hardihood to go a-hunting, *là bas* on the frontiers of Turkestan, a certain unique animal described by Marco Polo, called the Ovis Polis, and they found and bagged him."

"Have you been on any of these grand hunts?" asked Juliette.

"One or two," said Casal. "The easiest: of course, to India, where I killed my half-dozen man-eaters, along with the rest of the world. Of that voyage I have the pleasantest memories. When a fellow has seen a thousand dawns from the attic windows of his club-house, it is a magnificent sensation, just for once, to see the sunrise, seated in a howdah swaying on a monstrous elephant, to cross one of those tremendous rivers that run illuminated blood beneath the rosy glare of the tropics. With a little too much danger to be going on with, I do not say that the thing wouldn't grow stale in time; but while the froth is on, it is a genuine sensation. I can tell you that after that sort of thing club and society life seem sufficiently tame for a long while."

"But *why* do you lead it?" asked Madame de Tillière. The charming terror that the evidence of personal courage in a man causes a woman to feel was so pronounced in Juliette during this speech of Casal's that for an instant she relaxed the watch upon her words. Her own exclamation astounded her; it made her blush. She thought it altogether too familiar, and feared that he would take advantage of it, if only in order to familiarize himself in turn with her. He was polite enough to answer, shaking his head with a sort of sad *bonhomie:*

"It is the story of a woman who has married ill,

madame. I threw the dice and turned up aces. A young man begins to amuse himself—or we all think it is amusement at the time—at twenty, because he *is* twenty, and he continues it at fifty, because he's fifty. It makes of a man a fly upon the world's great wheel, a stowaway on the ocean voyage of life. . . . But when he *knows* it. . . . "

He laughed as he failed to finish the sentence, a boy's boisterous and rollicking laugh, a trick that he had never forgotten, one of his attractions. It was rather a good joke for a man like Casal, wealthy, flattered by everybody, absolutely free, conspicuously happy, to pretend that he had missed his vocation and made a mess of life. But his very laughter masked the mockery, and the irony of such a situation was not so perceptible to Juliette as it would have been to a man of the world.

There was a silence now between these two.

Dinner was nearly over, and the time was at hand when the excitement of talk and an uncertain number of glasses of excellent wine usually bring in their wake something more or less outrageous, in the way of a remark or train of thought, from the least judicious member of a dinner-party. The Baron d'Artelles took upon himself to talk about Madame de Corcieux, who, as everybody present knew, had indulged in a flirtation with Casal. It was nothing very risky that he was saying, but sufficiently so to place the young man in a rather embarrassing position.

"What in the name of fate," he was giving tongue to, "possessed poor Pauline to come out as a *blonde?* Has she no friend to tell her that it makes her look ten good years older? And she is getting to be of such a 'youth,'

as the American calls it, that she no longer requires an addition of ten to her birthdays, or even *five!*"

"It reminds me of old Bonnivet, whom you have often seen, madame," interposed the crafty and politic Mosé, to turn the conversation, addressing Gabrielle; "you know he used to dye his hair?"

"You mean you know he was enamelled?" put in De Candolle, with a tipsy laugh.

"In short," went on the banker, "whether he used to dye or enamel, or what not, he used to hide it from the world; but he could not hide it from his barber, who said to me one day with a grin: 'If I only dared to speak to him about it, I would tell him that I could do it a great deal better for him.' To cut the story, our Bonnivet fell ill. Rheumatism racked his every limb. I went to see him, and his hair was the color of snow. Guess what his greeting was, ladies! 'You see what I have suffered, Mosé; it has turned my hair quite white!'"

"That did not prevent Madame de Corcieux," went on D'Artelles, who was fond of hearing the music of his own voice, "from 'trying it on.' Let's see. How old is she, about? I say, Casal, *you* ought to know how old she is."

These words were no sooner pronounced than the imprudent man felt that he had committed a verbal *faux pas;* and, cutting himself short, he grew very red in the face, while all the party held their peace, which made Casal the more conspicuous. He could neither attack nor defend his former friend. He took a middle course, and said, innocently:

"Madame de Corcieux? Well, when I saluted her at the Opera the other day she was just as old as very pretty

women usually are, who happen to be over five and twenty ; and Bonnivet, ancient peer of France as he is, was reclining in his *fauteuil*, a very old and very broken man, in spite of his brave way of saying, with his best Faubourg St. Germain grace : 'There is no such thing, my dear fellow, as *Age*, no such thing. It is simply a question of Vitality ! ' "

Everybody laughed with real enjoyment at this exceedingly neat way of turning the tables on the injudicious D'Artelles. Casal, who felt that he had really pleased his new friend and neighbor, now took care that the conversation should become more general, by relating pleasantly a few anecdotes of his adventures in Japan. He found means to show himself so genially *spirituel* that, as the ladies were leaving the table, Gabrielle approached Casal and whispered him :

"You have set the ball nicely rolling, and, take my word for it, have *pleased* her. Now smoke in peace—but I forgot, you hardly ever smoke. But you may sip your *eau-de-vie* with a good conscience ; and mind, come to us *soon*."

The young man smiled and bowed, as he held the door open for his hostess. But when, an hour later, his companions returned from the smoking-room, Madame de Candolle looked in vain for the manly but graceful figure of her *protégé*. He was a sufficiently old hand in the mysteries of flirtation to disappear on his success. She looked at Juliette, who also had remarked the flight. Not aware that she was observed, there was an unmistakable frown on her brow. When Madame de Tillière's carriage was announced at a quarter to ten, that little signal of distress was still hanging out ; and the Countess's

teasing query as she kissed her good-night was not calculated to soothe her nerves :

"I *hope* you have not been too awfully, awfully bored. You must allow that 'our Casal' is not so horrid as his reputation—quite."

"But he hasn't," laughed Juliette, with some constraint —"he hasn't sat long enough in the dock for a legal trial."

"True, all the same, my lady," said Gabrielle to herself when her friend was gone, "that you are '*struck*.' Did he not make a mistake in taking himself off ?"

In which assumption, delicately just as her judgments usually were, she was herself mistaken ; for, rolling home in her brougham to the Rue Matignon, Juliette's best thoughts were for the man who had disappeared, and it was with a painful start that she received the footman's intimation as he took her opera cloak :

"Monsieur le Comte de Poyanne is in the drawing-room, awaiting miladi." . . .

She had forgotten his existence.

III.

OLD FRIENDS ARE DEAR.

"'Tis sweet to think there is an eye will mark
Our coming—and grow brighter when we come."
—*Byron.*

JULIETTE loved nothing better, as a rule, than a long, long talk by the cosey ingle-side at such a witching hour of a winter night. This peculiar taste of hers was so well known that she received not only her suitor, Monsieur de Poyanne, at such a time, but also her other faithful intimates, such as Mirant, D'Avançon, De Jardes, and Accragne. The multiplicity of these visits put a stop to any tattle on the part of the servants. This clever woman divined what a charm there was, in the mid press and muddle of our turbulent Paris life, for a favored mortal to know a certain saloon, where at fixed hours he would be able to see a young and elegant woman who would listen gently to his passing thoughts, in turn consoling or consulting, having apparently no sweeter object in life than these semi-celestial moments of innocent though quasi-clandestine *tête-à-têie*. It pleased her to envelope those in whom she interested herself with a halo of intelligence. Affection doubled these delicate pleasures in

the case of De Poyanne. How many evenings had they thus passed in friendship before he declared his love to her—listening intentively and indefinitely to the long story of the trials and discomfitures of his existence. He used to tell her of his melancholy boyhood in the shadowy old Hôtel Poyanne, at Besançon; of his dead mother; of the harsh severity of the injudicious father that made his youth an earthly purgatory. Of his marriage he told Juliette exhaustively, his marriage with a lovely girl long known; of their brief happiness, of the first jealousies, of his shame at her defection; then of her treason—and what a terrible treason!—with the friend of his manhood, who had been altogether dear to him. Then of the duel between the two men who had been so recently as brothers, a duel in which both were severely wounded. Then of the flight of Madame de Poyanne, since which day he had never set his eyes upon the woman that had been and was his wife. For this old-fashioned orator believed in the divine nature of marriage as well as in the divine right of kings, and nothing could tempt him into the divorce court, not even the imperilment of his chance of earthly happiness. And then of his despair. Then of his return to energy and life and duty; and of the campaign of 1870, when he was captain of artillery. Then of his entrance to the world political, and of his progress as a speaker in the Assemblies of Bordeaux and Versailles. And when pity had been superseded by mutual affection, when Juliette had become the promised bride of this unhappy man, who, like her mother, seemed to have had a superfluity of suffering, how many an evening had they passed together, when she listened with the complaisance of love to the inter-

minable account of the daily labor of this enthusiastic orator, giving back to him his lost faith in himself when his fatigues seemed too heavy to be borne, throwing the light of her scintillant judgment on some vexed point of policy, admiring him always with exceeding animation, when he displayed for her, and for her alone, his vast reserves of argument in favor of the great conservative cause; and all this without crossing the pale of womanliness, and with a delicate and caressing way of listening which excluded the suspicion of mere patronage on her part.

. . . . . .

In accordance with her complex nature, when Juliette realized that the announcement of Poyanne's presence was an almost painful awakening to her, she set this feeling down to the account of having probably caused Henry more or less pain in putting off their appointment of the evening; all the more so when she recognized the Count's valet waiting in the antechamber. To her inquiry he answered:

"I am waiting, madame, for the proofs of the speech that monsieur delivered, to carry them to the newspaper office."

"I remember, he told me," said Juliette to herself; "he will want to know why I am home so late. It is not like me to show so little interest in him and his affairs."

In cold truth, Poyanne's visit was disagreeable to her because it cut short her revery on the events of the evening, and prevented her from thinking freely of Casal. Such was the depth of impression that singular man had made upon her mental retina already. But how could she admit this to herself as the cause of her annoyance, when

she was so certain that her heart was Henry de Poyanne's for life? This persuasion of hers served to gild her errors of emotion, if errors there had been, in her *tête-à-tête* with Casal, and in subsequent reflections on him. Ah! how we delude, or try to delude, our consciences, day by day, year in and year out, as to the real nature of our thoughts, our secret springs of sentiment!

Juliette would shortly have to acknowledge to herself, in the awakening of an hour, that the illusion was no longer tenable—indeed, that very evening.

"You are angry with me, dear?" she cried, on entering the little Louis XVI. boudoir, now even more inviting and elegant than by the soft April sunlight, under the mingled rays of fire and lamp. The count was seated at the very *escritoire* on which she had written him the letter of the afternoon. As soon as she came in, he rose with a lover's haste and kissed her hand; then, showing her the pile of proofs that encumbered her little desk, he exclaimed:

"Angry? As if I could be, even if I had the time, which, as you see"—pointing to the papers—"I have not. I was hard at work while waiting for you, for taking which liberty I hope you will forgive me. We got away from the sitting so very late, and I had all these proofs to correct for the *Journal Officiel.* I told my man to bring them to me here, and I am so glad," added he, with the gayety of one who has finished a heavy task, "that they are very nearly ready; you will excuse me?"

Reseating himself, De Poyanne finished his marginal hieroglyphics; then, picking up the scattered sheets in both hands, he folded them in a large envelope already addressed, and hurriedly went out to give them himself

to the patient valet in the hall. All this did not take more than ten minutes.

And now why did Juliette, who in her nervousness dreaded that she had caused her lover pain and annoyance, find herself chagrined when she realized the utter calm and kindness of his reception? Certainly, the fault she had committed in feeling all the evening so much interested in Casal and in his company, even to the temporary oblivion of Poyanne—all this in the order of every-day happenings was forgivable. In the order of matters of the heart, it was not, however, quite so venial. Although these things only flashed through Juliette's mind as through a glass, darkly, she had hoped that Henry, by exhibiting some slight degree of temper, would have balanced her own remissness, and thus permitted her to "make it up to him" by those little wheedling ways of grace a woman loves to put in force when "anything has happened." The absolute contrast between the tumult of her own feelings and the Count's tranquillity gave her a sort of shock. It seemed as if Henry's love was not of the same quality that night as heretofore.

Singular danger signal and ominous mirage of dwindling love, of whose defection we are yet ignorant, when we reproach those whom we ourselves love less with not being so affectionate as they were! And to think that we are able to pass this counterfeit excuse upon ourselves in all good faith!

Never, in the many months they had known each other, had Juliette felt this sensation of something dead or dying in her heart toward Henry de Poyanne. She approached the mantel, as the count was engaged in putting the last artistic touches to the proofs of his recent speech,

and with one little satin slipper on the fender, scrutinized her lover's face in the looking-glass. Why did the image of another seem to interpose itself suddenly between Henry and herself, even to the blotting out of the dear friend who was sitting in the self-same room? Why, by the lightnings of her stormy vision, did she behold the reflection of the man with whom she had sat down to dinner, the face, as Gabrielle called him, of "handsome Casal"? The man himself, as he stood before her when she passed out of the dining-room, with his supple yet powerful gestures, his manly but tired look—all were in that looking-glass, instead of Henry de Poyanne.

When this ill-boding mental photograph faded away in the high light of reality, she was able quietly once more to look upon the likeness of the man with whom, of her own free will, she had exchanged vows of durable affection—not yesterday, which might have made her forgetfulness excusable, but months and years ago. Instantly, and in virtue of the startling contrast between these two men, Henry appeared in her eyes so awkward, so wretchedly mean. She turned away and sighed. Count Henry de Poyanne, at that time forty-five years of age, was a tall, spare man, not very strong temperamentally; and the sorrows of his youth, the trials of his marriage, together with the cares of parliamentary life, had still further eaten into his constitutional reserves. His shoulders stooped through so much desk work, his brown hair was plentifully sprinkled with the icicles of years, and did not grow so thick as formerly. His complexion was somewhat clouded with those *bistre* tints that betray impoverished blood and the enervation of an ever-sedentary life. Even so, there was an ineradicable seal of lofty birth on

his features and his bearing. His flashing blue eyes, the haughty curve of his lips, and a certain magnanimity of bearing, made him still a handsome man. There was a reserve of power in the Count that had distinguished him since boyhood, and enabled him to face the world and all its woes with almost undiminished nerve. He had much warmth of sentiment, profound fidelity and faith, and an unconquerable will. A woman could only have given her heart to this man in virtue of its best and highest sentiments, or through the enthusiasm due to eloquence, or on account of a passionate desire to heal his wounded happiness. In point of fact, it was all these motives in conjunction that had determined Juliette's love.

But the danger in these leanings of the heart to the romantic, where a woman has allowed her feelings to be overcome by intellectual admiration or sentimental pity, is that an hour may come when this very admiration will evaporate through too much cherishing its object, the pity vanish with too great satisfaction.

Juliette was beginning, to her shame and sorrow, to realize these metaphysical truths. Had she mistaken the real nature of her own sentiments, and found her error out, too late?

Happy the woman in whom this revulsion occurs without external motive, and not by the cruel process of the image of another intercepting the features dear to her by duty! Happy the woman to whom the awakening comes as opportune, and not in the guise of a most painful and most compromising disenchantment!

"You have been terribly hard at work; I will make a little punch for you," said Juliette, turning to the Count with her pleasantest smile.

I WILL MAKE A LITTLE PUNCH FOR YOU SAID JULIETTE.

"If you will be so very kind!" cried Poyanne at Juliette's offer. And, in his turn, he began to scrutinize his promised wife, as with her own dainty fingers she set about putting the necessary lumps of sugar into the tumbler, with water from a silver kettle. In evening dress still, Juliette looked, amidst her own placid surroundings, more adorable than ever—more than ever, with her pale-gold hair and ethereal expression, like the portrait of her ancestress. As the rose tints of Juliette's robe shimmered from beneath its trellis-work of priceless lace, and her bare arms glowed in the harmonious lights from hearth and lamp, type of tender womanhood it would be sacrilege to call voluptuous, the Count sprang forward and exclaimed, as though the words were forced from him by the intensity of his admiration:

"How beautiful you are to-night, my darling! and what a glorious thing for me to have you here!"

Saying this, he bent over Juliette to kiss her, but she turned away her head with a gesture of impatience, and cried:

"Take care, take care, you *are* so awkward; you will make me spill the spirit."

Just then she was engaged in pouring a tablespoonful of *eau-de-vie* into the tumbler as the Count bent over her chair, intending to take her in his arms. Her words themselves were nothing, and there was only the charming mutiny of coquetry, perhaps, in the quick movement by means of which she glided from his proffered endearment and allowed his warm lips to waste themselves upon her silken hair. Nevertheless, it made him draw away, a prey to cruel impressions, the feelings of a suitor when his well-beloved for the first time refuses to let her heart-strings thrill in unison with his own.

Yes, this little gesture of retreat was a simple nothing. But when these graceful rebuffs are multiplied a hundred times, a lover falls into a state of fear, the fear that is so hard to bear—that he not only now no longer pleases, but displeases—an inward terror that congeals the heart and freezes the very words of love upon one's lips.

In this lay the danger of misunderstanding that was destined to more and more estrange these gentle hearts. Without taking thought, and instinctively yielding to this sentiment of waning tenderness that almost now appeared to her the tendency of weeks instead of hours, Juliette had refused a caress from the very man whom, in her soul, she was accusing of diminished love. She busied herself in the preparation of the promised punch, pounding the dissolving sugar into atoms against the sides of the glass, and finally, with a smile, putting her own lips to it to see if it was sweet enough.

"Why, now," she exclaimed, with a glance of reproach, "it is too strong. I told you you would make me spoil it, and I must make another."

"Let me help you to mix it," said he, making as though to take her arm.

"This time, I order you to sit still," said Juliette, again drawing away, "and don't disturb me in my household duties any more."

"I obey!" he exclaimed, and with his elbows on the marble mantelpiece, he looked at her again, without her paying any more attention to his lover's gaze than he had to her self-analysis in the same mirror a little while before. He thought, even now, that when Juliette turned away her face from his proffered caress it was but a little childish bit of teasing by-play. All the same, this little harm-

less bit of by-play was destined to seal his lips that night from speaking out a certain something that was on his mind. Letters received that very morning had apprised him that his presence was required in Les Doubs by a double election to the Conseil Général. It was a question of carrying off two seats from his political adversaries, in favor of men who, if helped by his eloquence, would no doubt succeed ; and he took his position as Leader of the Right altogether too seriously to be remiss in such a business, which to him spelt duty. He had come to the Rue Matignon with the object of asking Madame de Tillière for an interview to say good-by before he went away ; and now, after that little gesture of hers, he felt himself incapable of making known his wish. This passionate timidity, even amid surroundings which seemed to charm away all fear and all exclusiveness, would, no doubt, have made an ordinary lover smile. For instance, Casal, if anybody had come to him and detailed to him this *tête-à-tête !* It is, notwithstanding, a sufficiently common phenomenon amongst lovers to merit a moment's analysis.

Certain men, Poyanne of the number, pure-minded from their boyhood upward, and in their manhood cruelly betrayed, as the years go on allow a thundercloud of self-distrust to gather over them. And this sense of being ill at ease with themselves makes them exhibit in their love-affairs a delicacy which would be less out of place in womankind. In their case affection is haunted by anxiety, and the very freedom of intercourse which would draw out other men serves but to lock them up the more securely in their voluntary prison. Nothing could appear more unintelligible to a man of the world.

But is it feasible to formulate the palpitating shadows of the heart? A lover's complaint is often founded on his own baseless fancy; and Juliette, in this case, merited no reproach, because she did not understand the regrets that she was raising, all the more vivid in this loyal heart because it was by no means the first time that Poyanne had asked himself if he was worthy of the love of this uniquely tender woman.

But even had he been waiting to complain, it would have been hard to find an opportunity, when Juliette came toward him with a dimpling face of pleasure for his satisfaction, to hand him his steaming punch, this time prepared to admiration.

"And *now*," she exclaimed, "I believe the liquid will be to your taste. My poor Henry looks tired to death. I am certain you have been working too hard in that horrid chamber. Why was it you decided to make a speech, when you said you would not, dear?"

"Oh, thank you," said the Count, sipping, and then setting the glass on the mantel. "'What decided me to make a speech?'

"The thing that decided me to speak," he repeated, "was this same party egotism I have so often told you about, directed at the efforts of the Right. Never will I let it pass without a word of protest, in any French assembly I belong to, monarchist or Christian, republican or what not, that we, because we have the sense and honor to be ranged upon the Right, have no longer anything in common with the misfortunes and the miseries of the PEOPLE! . . . De Sauve had interpellated the minister about that strike in the North, and the measures of repression that had been taken in consequence.

A speaker of the majority replied, with all the hackneyed phrases you can guess, deriding the old *régime*, as if the progress of our own day, where there is improvement, would not have been brought about by the forces of years, without the butcheries of the Revolution, without the cannonading of the Third Napoleon, without the torches of the *pétroleuses!*

"But you know my ideas *so well*, and you can guess, dear Juliette, what I said. I clinched my thoughts amidst the groans of the Left—who were livid with anger at the logicality of what I put to them—and the acclamations of our friends. . . . But to what end? Ah! the authors of these days, who make it their business to analyze the pains and penalties of modern life, have failed to write up the heart-sickness of the orator who flings himself into the arena for a doctrine which he believes in with his heart of hearts, his soul of souls, whom his partisans applaud, as though he were an actor or a *virtuoso*, but who has the awful knowledge that his words will entrain no single *action!* From Left to Right, our whole political life of to-day is a series of shifting combinations of misanthropic cliques, dissatisfied cabals —and, in the mean time, France is being ruined. I told them that, and told it them twice over—oh! but all in vain, *in vain!*" . . .

He came and went, taking up and retaking this subject, all too grave, almost, for Parliament, a reflex of so many bootless sittings there have been since the war, mere bellowings of wind-philosophy.

Juliette knew that this moving voice and accent of her lover lied not. She knew with what strength of conviction Poyanne had embraced a cause on which the future

only can pronounce a just judgment; she knew of his unconquerable hope that he might yet reknit these two torn halves of our great country—the great botch-work of the nineteenth century, placed, as we are, between traditional monarchy on the one hand, and the crude theory upon the other that the mob is king! She had been powerfully and long interested in these dreams of a statesman whom she knew to be sincere, guessed to be misunderstood, and hoped would yet be honored and successful. Still, she was "only a woman," and on this very day when, in her estimation, her lover's ardor had begun to cool, so her admiration for these lofty ideals appeared not quite so real and warm as yesterday.

Whoever lives a great deal in the realm of thought, no matter whether painter or man of science, leader of a political party or author, has at hand an infallible touchstone whereby to test the affection of the woman for whom he cares, wife or sweetheart, or only sister. On the day, in the hour, when she no longer accords him that passionate attention of the intellect which is a vital necessity for the artisan of thought, that very day, that very hour, she has withdrawn the admiration of her heart, and will vainly try to make up for its absence by lip-service and perfunctory attendance. This was the case between these two, as now it stood, when Henry de Poyanne concluded his tirade.

"All that is exceedingly true and very fine," said Juliette, "but in the mean time will you not be kind enough to think a little bit of *me?*"

"To think a little bit of *you!*" replied Henry, with a look of sad surprise. "And for whom is it that I pray my name may yet become illustrious? At whose feet

have I learnt the fortitude to carry me through so many public disillusions ?"

"Ah !" said she, prettily shaking her fair locks, "you know how to frame soft answers. But do you wish me to prove to you how very little and how very seldom you have thought this day of *me?*"

"You know," said Poyanne with a smile—"you know very well that you wrote me you would dine with Gabrielle ?"

"She was not the only one at dinner," put in Juliette, the prey of that evil spirit of curiosity that has prompted the best of women before now to tempt the jealousy of man by talking to them of a second.

"She is not angry with me," asked the Count, "because I am in arrears with my visiting cards ?" without noticing Juliette's frivolous interposition.

"Not the least in the world." And then, in an indifferent tone: "I sat at dinner next to a man I *know* you do not care for."

"And who might that have been ?" asked De Poyanne at last.

"Monsieur Casal," answered Juliette, regarding his face with the utmost attention in order to see the effect on the Count of the name of his old enemy.

"How can Madame de Candolle countenance such an acquaintance ?" said Poyanne, in a tone of indignation that at once amused and annoyed Juliette. Juliette smiled, she could not help it, because Henry's question was nearly word for word the phrase that Gabrielle had prophesied that he would use when he got to know that Casal had been her guest. And she frowned because this disdain and hatred on Henry's part was the cruellest pos-

sible critique on the impression that Casal had made on *her*. And the Count insisted:

"No doubt it was her husband who foisted his society on Madame de Candolle. He and Casal together make a pretty pair. The last, however, with his mixed life of gambler and libertine, does not dishonor one of the historic families of France."

"But, I must tell you," said Juliette—"I must tell you that I had a very jolly talk with him."

"What about?" asked the Count. "He must have sloughed the adder's skin very recently if you managed to get anything out of him not pertaining to the gaming-table or the race-course. I have heard him chattering too often at the Corcieux' and one or two other houses."

"She loved him, then, very dearly?" asked Juliette.

"She loved him insanely," answered the Count, with the marked hostility he never failed to show when any infraction of the family tie was alluded to in his presence. "It was always a horrible mystery to me how such a charming woman could care for such a vulgar snob, with his infamous air of boredom at being made so much of! And with a husband wise, distinguished, rich, and kind, who adored her, and adores her still! I have ceased to visit them, knowing what I do. I have suffered too much for poor Corcieux, and for her. Poor Pauline! She has been well rewarded. Casal is an infamous brute, with a heart and hand as chilly as the nether millstone."

"Nevertheless he spoke of her this evening with the greatest tact," persisted Juliette.

"Does he dare to frame her name?" responded De Poyanne.

There fell a silence then between the two lovers. Madame de Tillière, for her part, regretted too late having even mentioned her neighbor at the De Candolles'. She had toyed with Henry's jealousy, and was fearful now that she had roused it. She was too profoundly sensitive not to regret having inflicted pain upon one she had long imagined held the keys of her heart; who even now possessed, and always would, her entire esteem.

The clock struck midnight.

"Well," said Henry, "I must bid my Juliette good-night. When shall I see her again?"

"Whenever you like," smiled Juliette. "Will you come to dinner to-morrow? There will be only mother and Sophie de Nançay."

"I should like it very much," said De Poyanne. And then, in a moved voice:

"You are aware I have to leave to-morrow, and that I may be gone for four or five weeks?"

"No," said Juliette; "you never breathed a word of it."

"There are two elections on, for the Conseil Général, and they have sent for me."

"Always these horrid politics," said Juliette, smiling.

He regarded her once more with a look that she did not read, refused to read—a wish that the lips of this timid lover declined to speak aloud.

"Adieu!" said he, in tones of still greater emotion.

"*À demain!*" exclaimed Juliette. "A quarter to seven, but come a little earlier."

When the door had closed behind Henry, she remained motionless for many minutes, staring into the same mirror that had so lately shown her the likeness

of her lover. Why did the image of Raymond Casal once more stand between these lately happy spirits? and with what mental monster was she wrestling when she said aloud, before retiring for the night:

"Do I no longer love Henry de Poyanne?"

IV.

A CASAL IN LOVE.

"O love! why play with me?
Thou art the riddle of all the ages.
Love, Love! oh, set me free—
Let me alone, and let me go:
Lift thy magnetic eyes from mine!
Let some other way be thine."

—*Song: "Pilgrim of Passion."*

WHILST Juliette was in vain trying to sleep over this perplexing question in her little cot—the bed she had so often lain on as a girl, which, with all the rest of her maiden belongings, it had been her pleasure to resume as a widow, gentle mementos of her only happy days; whilst Poyanne was tramping his way to his lonely lodging in the Rue Matignac, reproaching himself that he no longer seemed to please his sweetheart, how was that third person, whose sudden apparition between these two meant disquietude, if not unhappiness, perhaps, for one, and moral misery for the other, engaged—Raymond Casal, so differently weighed in the balance by women and by men? Did he imagine at that moment that his beautiful neighbor of the hunting-dinner, instead of sleeping, was even then busily engaged in thinking of him, asking herself a thousand questions about his personality, his soul, while

all the time resolving to expel him from her mind? In love herself, as by herself supposed to be, what right had she to give her thoughts up to another, even for half an hour, when, for the time, her mental wool-gathering could not hurt Poyanne?

Casal had turned his back on the De Candolles persuaded that he had succeeded in attracting Madame de Tillière—in fact, had gone away so soon in order not to deaden the impression he was sure he had made. But the first thing he did when he once more found himself in the Rue Tilsitt, warmly wrapped in his heavy cloak, as he inhaled the fresh night air, and gazed on the starry sky, was not to retrace the delicate profile of the Widow de Tillière on his mind's eye. Only later on was he to find out how deeply he was touched. This Casal, man of Modern Paris, was in habit of reflecting deeply; but, after all, he did not know his own soul. Who knows himself entirely? Who can say, To-morrow I will be wanton or I will be sad; tender or jealous? *Blasé* with the thousand and one enjoyments that delight the gilded youth of the day—similar, no doubt, in kind in every great centre of civilization at every epoch—steeped in sensuous satisfaction, haughty as the tiger of the night, free as the eagle of the mountain-top, with two hundred and fifty thousand francs a year to lay out on nothing more costly than his particular gratification, Casal had perhaps a right to think himself both above and beyond the capacity of romance. His joyous boyish laugh (a trait that revealed him at his best) showed that, after all, in circumstances of less splendor, he would not have been a man whose heart was *ungetatable*.

Casal, deprived of both parents at an early age, always

in hot water with his guardians, accustomed from boyhood to absolute independence, seemed to have remained a bachelor—just as he was tall and strong and healthy—"because he was built that way." One could scarcely imagine him on his knees pouring out his soul to an imitation angel of eighteen in a white frock with a blue sash, as is the way with the average "jolly young bachelor" of Paris, when he has reached fifty, and begins to feel rheumatic from his cervical to his caudal vertebræ.

On the other hand, the native acuteness of his sensibilities, preserved intact in spite of all he had gone through, his delight in overcoming difficulties and achieving the impossible, and the necessity he ever labored under of finding employment for his surplus energies—all these traits were bound to render a love-adventure with a woman so utterly different from the "usual run," and so enchanting in her difference as Juliette de Tillière, both piquant and delightful.

Raymond knew very little about the gentle, tender-spirited sub-species of womankind of whom Juliette was a type. She was just as menacing a danger to his peace of mind as he to hers—with this reserve, that the young widow was capable of the deepest, most fatal love, while with Casal there was always the chance that his passion was but caprice. Not with impunity can a man carry sixteen or seventeen years of vanity in his memory.

But as he breathed the generous air of the Champs Élysées through his capacious lungs, and strode along with the firm step of the swordsman, Raymond Casal was ventilating no caprice; and when the image of Juliette came once more to him it was formed against a black background of thoughts that would have made the widow

more than ever appreciate what Gabrielle used to call the *pedantries* of De Poyanne.

"Gad! 'tis a glorious evening," Casal was soliloquizing; "if this spring weather holds, the race-tracks will be firm. . . . And that dinner wasn't so bad. People are beginning to look to their feed in the world again. It is to such fellows as I am that the improvement's due, all the same. If there wasn't half a dozen of us ready to tell De Candolle the truth about his *chef* and butler, we diners-out would be but badly off.

"What a fellow really wants now is to know what the deuce to do with himself between ten o'clock and midnight. I think I'll found a club to fill the bill. In the morning there is sleep, dress, and a ride. After breakfast there are always bills to be paid. And from two to six there is society; or, if not, racquets or fencing. From five to seven, poker. From eight to ten, dinner. From midnight to dawn, the card-table, and all the rest of it. From ten to twelve—it is true, there is the theatre, but how many pieces in the course of a year are worth seeing *twice?* I am too old, or perhaps not old enough, to enjoy that sort of thing!"

Talking of the theatre reminded Casal of a sprightly and rather attractive actress of the Vaudeville, to whom he had been paying a good deal of attention for some months—little Anroux. "Aha!" thought he, "suppose I go and hunt up Christine."

In fancy he beheld himself at the stage-door in the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, mounting the narrow stairway, saluted by the strange, chilly odors that float about the seamy side of every theatre, and then knocking at her dressing-room. He could see the handkerchiefs lying

around stained with rouge or chalk. Two or three actors, buffoons, thee-ing and thou-ing "the Anroux," their equal on the stage. As soon as they saw Casal they would file out, to leave him to bandy the news with Christine, who would tell him how Lucie and Arthur had fallen out, and so on. . . .

"No," thought Casal, "I will *not* go to the Vaudeville to-night. I think I will go to the club." . . . He invoked his imagination for a picture of the play-rooms, deserted at that hour; the footmen in livery slumbering on the velveteen lounges, and springing awkwardly to "attention!" at the entrance of a member, the snift of stale tobacco struggling for precedence with the sickly odors from the overheated stoves. "I should feel like a potential corpse at the club," he snarled. "Suppose I push on to the Opera? 'What to see?' The fourth act of 'Robert the Devil' for the five hundredth time. No, I will *not* patronize the Opera. . . . Ha! 'Phillips'!'" It was the name of the English bar, in the Rue Mauroy, Parisians had just then gone in for. Just after the "rumpus" that followed the disgraceful duel in the "Eureka"—more familiarly known as "The Old 'Un"—a rival bar well known to the night-hawks in the early '70s, Casal and his gang had headed a secession, and emigrated to the barroom in Rue Mauroy. If a chronicler should chance along, versed in the doings of the gilded youth of those and later days, it would be a happy thought for him to write a strange chapter on the fashionable Paris bars and restaurants of the last quarter of the nineteenth century; and amongst the most curious of these "cribs," let him not forget to paint the aristocratic *Assommoirs*, where the *grands seigneurs* foregather after

the theatre's over, to drink cocktails and whiskey, cheek by jowl with jockeys and bookmakers. Casal in thought stood at the long, sloppy mahogany bar, with its sky-scraping bottle-cabinets, its pictures of horses and race-courses, and, at the far end, the little conversation-room, with its round tables, and engravings of pugilists and bull-dogs.

"Bah!" he cried, "just now I should only find Herbert there, with or without a napkin."

This Lord Herbert Bohun, younger brother of one of the richest of the English peers, the Marquis of Bambury, was at thirty a terrible fellow to drink—sometimes found in a state of incipient *delirium tremens*, trembling like a dotard of ninety. He had become notorious for having hunted up from somewhere two or three vile phrases descriptive of his love for the bottle. It was he who had answered the inquiry of a friend as to how he was, by saying: "Very well; I've a splendid thirst! What'll you put out the unquenchable fire with, dear old boy?"

His best fun, which, by the way, was only half in jest, was, after a roaring supper with his "pals," to take one end of his napkin in his right hand, and hold the other end round his neck with the left; and then, however "confoundedly" both hands trembled, he could raise a full beaker to his lips, without spilling a drop, by hauling up his dexter gradually.

"Stay!" thought Casal. "It is already too late. He would be now too drunk to know me. Decidedly, what *I* should prefer would be the society of some witty woman."

This soliloquy by now had brought "our Casal" to the turning-post. Now, for the first time, afresh, did he recollect his sweet neighbor, and he thought aloud:

"*Ma foi!* Madame de Tillière! She would be awfully jolly to talk to in my misery. I wonder what she's up to!" Sooth to say, the formulæ he used were terribly slangy, and such as would have shocked Poyanne anew. But there was a little flickering image in the camera obscura of this man's sophisticated soul, destined to start into more brilliant life, and prompt his irreverential spirit to think more purely. Every man is a small universe in himself, and let him be as vicious as he may, he has the embryonic germs of nobler thoughts, if he would only give them air.

If Casal had never half-consciously inhaled the delicious aroma of Juliette's personality, that, like a moss-hid violet, spread its sweetness to the favoring wind, acknowledged but unseen, never would he have experienced to the same extent that sense of repugnance to the soporific society of the soubrette of the Vaudeville. Excellent as the assigned reasons were for frequenting neither theatre, club, nor bar, it is certain that they would not have been more operative that night of nights had he not experienced a pressing wish to be alone.

Why, if not in order to think at large on the lovely and absurdly lovable woman whose image, evoked from the deep darkness of his lowest plane of thought, in a single second obliterated those mind-pictures of Phillips' and "unlimited loo," of devilled rarebits with Lord Bohun at one P.M., and *tête-à-tête*, *carte blanche*, with "the Anroux"?

Sporting men, who lead an intense physical life, end by educating their senses to the acumen of savages. They have to a marvellous degree the external memory peculiar to huntsmen, woodsmen, sailors—to all who study

things, and not the signs of things. Forms and colors photograph themselves on their brains with a distinctness and relief of which arm-chair travellers and studio-painters have little idea.

He could see Juliette's figure, the pearls in her glistening hair, the chain of pearls around her fine but not too slender throat, the shimmer of the wax candles on her robe; but above all the mystery of her smiling lips, that seemed to challenge him to fan the gentle dimples beside them with some zephyr-speech.

"What is she doing now, I wonder?" he reiterated more respectfully, and with a certain awe. Her sapphire eyes, with their volitant lights, began to intimidate his coarser fibres, as the revolving mirror of the professional hypnotist puts into a trance the most refractory patient.

"It is all one," he cried. "She looked at me *particularly*, and more than once, *as if she meant it*, after seeming actually not to notice me. It was a 'put-up thing,' I am *positive* of it, between her and Gabrielle de Candolle—the dinner-party. They are intimate friends. I didn't do so badly. Yes, I am *sure* of it. What was the meaning of her curiosity? Had she heard some other woman talking of me? Perhaps her lover?—for she must have one. After all, perhaps she hasn't. There are not many women who. . . . She lives a quiet life. How lovely she is! Suppose I 'make up to her'? I have nothing in view for the spring. A good idea. . . . Where to find her? I dined beside her, and can go and see her—happy thought!—at any time, instead of leaving a card."

He was so delighted with the very idea that he electrified the echoes with a peal of merry laughter. "*C'est cela!*"

he cried. "To-morrow—yes, I must pay her a visit to-morrow. What have I got to do to-morrow? . . . The Bois in the morning with De Candolle. Splendid; he will 'give me the office.' *Dejeuner chez Christine.* That can be skipped. I have been breakfasting out too much lately. Breakfasting out makes one sulky for the day. Well, I skip Christine, and at two P.M. I hasten to the charming widow's. At four I shoot with Wékeioff. . . . Suppose, for a change, I go to bed 'right away.' It is now a little after eleven. Last night—this morning, I mean—was the eighth day running I didn't go to bed till cock-crow. Let us turn in now, so as to be in good form to-morrow."

With this sage resolution, Casal "obliqued" *via* the Rue Boissy d'Anglas, stopping neither at the *Imperial* nor the *Petit Cercle*, and strode straight for the Rue Lisbonne, where was situated the house Raymond inherited from his father, which was kept up as completely as if the family continued to reside there.

In order to account for the continuous good health of men who ostensibly transgress every law of nature as a mere matter of preference habitually, and are cited as wonders of the day, there must be some safety-valve or counterpoise unknown to their admirers and would-be imitators. Those who attempt to follow, and do not look before they leap, will find themselves out of the hunt very quickly. Those who survive, and astonish successive generations by their indefatigable activity on the hunting-field, at the green table, in the saloon—and elsewhere—have taken care, like Casal, to slip out of the Corybantic procession occasionally, and, unperceived by the crowd, to return to the worship of Hygeia.

The sobriety of a monk—or, rather, of a hermit—in the morning will perhaps correct an overdose of Veuve Cliquôt the night before. Sometimes it is a judicious nap that does the business, extended to the instant when one is forced to dress and join the mob; sometimes a *quantum suff.* of strenuous exercise in the gymnasium, or the good offices of the *masseur*, or a genuine bit of domestic hydropathy. Machiavelli has it that "the world is for the men who have cool heads." When Raymond Casal rose in the morning at about eight o'clock, to take his cold bath, he felt marvellously refreshed by the sweetest slumber of a life that had been nearly all play and little work. His matin revery was a continuation of his evening dreams—the attempted solution of a metaphysical problem, the key to which was JULIETTE.

Casal's dressing-room was a celebrated apartment amongst his particular friends, being remarkable for what he facetiously termed his "library." It is true he had a very fine library in another part of the mansion, but these particular shelves held anything rather than books. One of the ranges, veiled by the red silk curtains so often seen in old-fashioned book-cases, supplementing the diamond-shaped panes, contained an extraordinary medley of modern guns: breech-loaders by London makers, Lang and Purdey; repeaters from the United States—every kind of single and double barrel that could assist him in the field. Another held a quite astounding *collectanea* of boots, shoes, and slippers—over two hundred pairs, from the stoutest elephant-soled, warranted waterproof shooting-boot to the most *récherché* polished shoes for evening dress, or velvet slippers for dawdling over breakfast—boots for all kinds of sport, from steeple-chas-

ing to polo. Other wings of the "library" held coats and vests, pyjamas, pants, undercoats and overcoats, fur-lined coats and "zephyrs," too numerous by far to mention. The younger and less sophisticated dudes of the day used often to make a morning pilgrimage in order to "assist" at the toilette of this modern Mæcenas of the arts sutorial and sartorial, when they would gaze with affectionate interest at these curiosities of dress for half an hour at a time, calculating in their minds how soon the time might come for them to make a similarly elaborate museum.

Casal was nearer forty years of age than thirty. At that period of life one is apt to lavish little cares on one's appearance that in another ten years will change to indifference, and in another will yield to artifice—if there is any vanity of person then remaining. It was easy to see in Casal's mien that he still thought himself able to please; and, to put his intention beyond doubt, he was no sooner dressed than he sat down and scribbled off a note to Madame Christine Anroux, 83 Avenue de l'Alma, excusing himself on some frivolous pretext from breakfasting with her, humming to himself meanwhile an air then in vogue, "For she is such an Artless Thing."

His horse "Boscard" came to a trot as he entered the Bois, very charming on such a bright spring morning in its garb of tender green, rejoicing in all the chromatic beauty of geraniums set out for the season, and rhododendrons, with their extraordinary variety of tints, coming into bloom. If "Boscard" was by no means one of his speediest horses, deriving, as it did, its nickname from the owner's wish to mark his opinion of the friend who had "taken him in" by obtaining an out-of-the-way price

for the animal on the strength of its showy appearance, his choice of steed this morning was an additional proof of a wish on the rider's part to "take it easy" and "dream" as he went along. When chance, as we unthinkingly call the mysterious chain of events that dominates the earthly career, brings two persons face to face who are destined to influence each other's lives, it seems to take a pleasure in multiplying coincidences, so much so as to justify one's belief in presentiments. But common logic suffices to explain these things. If it was in the nature of events that some day Casal and Juliette should be presented to each other, it was perhaps not less natural that he should that very morning encounter not only De Candolle, with whom he had made the appointment, but afterward Mosé, Prosny, and Madame d'Arcole, and no less natural that all these persons should have remarked the evening before the depression of Madame de Tillière after Casal's sudden departure, especially noticeable following the high spirits in which she appeared to be at the dinner-table, and "chaff" him pleasantly about her. Ten times a day men and women of the world indulge in such little strokes of wit at each other's expense; and Casal, had it regarded anybody else, would have been the first to admit that it was only for the sake of talk. At such a time these feather-strokes of society tattle fell in so well with his humor that he was delighted to take particular notice of them.

First it was Prosny, galloping through the beautiful glades of the Bois, who shouted, without reining his nag: "Broken-hearted, the little widow, after your flight last night, Casal—broken-hearted, my boy!"

Then, in another mile or so, Mosé, who stopped our

cavalier with a motion of his jewelled hand. He was on foot, according to his morning habit, indulging in unlimited walking exercise, in order to ward off an incipient attack of diabetes, taking to his regimen with the unappeasable energy that distinguishes the Jew and the American. These two races, the most pig-headed peoples of the world, and also the least intimately known, because it is but so lately they have climbed to the top of the social staircase, have in common this distinguishing trait of adamantine firmness in face of all possible misfortunes. It is not unusual to see a Yankee or a Hebrew at the age of fifty engaged in hewing from the rough a novel stepladder to fortune by means of protracted personal effort in some new career of his choice before unpractised. The Israelite, in particular, seldom misses his mark in the smallest detail of the day's affairs; and thus Mosé, formerly unfriendly with Casal, but now reconciled with him, hastened to make a remark that he imagined would be well received, and might prove an acceptable hint:

"How soon you went away last night, my dear fellow!"

"I had a friend waiting for me at the club," said Casal, from horseback. Already the fine brown eyes of the Hebrew seemed to be uncomfortably reading his thoughts, and he betook himself to the first subterfuge that came into his head.

"And you carted off with you the best behavior of the ladies," continued Mosé. "Madame de Candolle and her sister began to mutter to each other in a corner, and as for the little De Tillière, when *you* were gone there might as well have been nobody left in the world!"

A quarter of an hour later Casal came across Madame

d'Arcole in her dainty turn-out with the cream-colored ponies. She signalled him with her whip to stop, and when he was opposite the carriage cried:

"And how do you like my sister's bosom friend? Ideally pretty, isn't she? And you sneaked away to go Heaven only knows where! *Maladroit!*"

Giving a flick to her ponies, she was off like a flash, with a complicated smile on her dark face that seemed to signify to Raymond: "If you are not an ignoramus, you will throw your bread in those waters, and it will return to you before many days are over." It was hardly the advice of a lady, herself the sister of the noble-minded Madame de Candolle. But instinctively the Duchess felt no great love for Juliette, because the latter always seemed to be coming between her and Gabrielle. She adored this bright-haired, brave little sister of hers, and that was why she would not be sorry to be able to say: "*Hé bien*, your angel without wings is carrying on a full-fledged flirtation with Raymond Casal."

And then, as though to clinch the matter, when, a few minutes after, he met De Candolle, as they ambled along together, the latter cried, with a fat Teutonic laugh—his great-grandfather had intermarried in Wurtemburg after the Revolution:

"Good luck, my chicken; you didn't manœuvre so badly last night, eh? A little prude, the widow, isn't she? Madame Bernard tells me the Captain nearly died of the blues after he married her. . . . I had my fears for you. . . . But you played your part to perfection!"

"What are you 'getting at,' De Candolle?"

"As if you didn't know! You and the Widow Tillière."

"Well, what sort of a woman *is* she, anyhow?"

"Oh! everything you can imagine that is most truly rural, most un-Parisian, most *chittish.* She lives with an antiquated mamma in a house as old and rickety as a Pompeian mausoleum. In one word, if she and my wife were shaken up together in a sack, I don't know which would come out last!"

The sum total of this human porker's wit consisted in aiming his bluff epigrams at the exquisite creature whom he could neither forgive for the benefits she showered on him, the fortune she abandoned to his caprices, nor for the treason to his marital vows with which he repaid her. He added, after another chuckle at his *mot:*

"Was the widow to your taste? Would you marry her if you had the chance?"

This introduction was timely enough to deter Casal from asking the question he had in view about Juliette's address. "De Candolle can't get through the day decently," he thought, "without bragging about his Madame Bernard. . . . It doesn't matter; I can find the address from the directory."

Casal was so impatient to pay his intended visit to Madame de Tillière that he abridged his morning ride, a prey to an exaltation of soul quite rare with him. As soon as he reached his own house, his first thought was to turn to one of those blue books of fashion in which the retired grocer, at the cost of a subscription, can admire his name in print, along with those of millionnaires and princes—number and street complete—authenticated as a member of the Upper Ten. Madame de Tillière could not be found in the repertory of fashion, because the house was in her mother's name.

"I cannot cross-examine any of the folk that were of the party last night," thought Casal; "they are 'on to me' too much as it is."

All these little speeches proved too well how much he had interested the widow for him to renounce his visit now. If Casal had not been more interested in her than he himself imagined, he might have postponed it in order to take the chances of a talk with Madame de Candolle to learn Juliette's street and number. In preference to that, he bethought himself that he could send his valet to inquire Madame de Tillière's address from the Countess's *concierge.* "The very thing!" he thought. "The *concierge* has not yet heard any society back-chat about the matter, and will not scent anything the least unusual."

Nevertheless, which showed how deeply the widow's image had sunk into his heart, the bare idea of these two servants chirping, chin to chin, about their mistress's and their master's affairs, and importing the fair Juliette into their tattle, in spite of the unlikelihood, was so repellent to him that Casal, as a preventive, charged his man with half a dozen other frivolous commissions before throwing out at the last: "By the way, as you will be in the neighborhood, just ask the De Candolles' portet the address of Madame de Tillière and her mother. I shall have to leave my card, and have forgotten it. Can you recollect the name—De Tillière?"

Thanks to this little ruse, which would have seemed extremely funny to Lord Bohun in his cups, he was able at two o'clock to lift the same old-fashioned knocker in the Rue Matignon on which, in our first chapter, we saw the Countess lay her well-gloved hand—a summons which drew in its train all the after-movements of the persons of

this little drama. The carriage "accident" was coming to the front, with its contingencies, already.

"It suits her very well, this sequestered eighteenth-century house," thought Casal, as he traversed the grass-grown court, and stepped into the quaint glass porch. The *concierge* had informed him Madame de Tillière was within. Juliette made it a rule never to leave word that she was "not at home," just as, later on in the evening, she was in the habit of receiving not only De Poyanne, but all her friends, as they might chance to call. Besides, since there were not so many who had the right of *entrée*, and as she was not in the habit of pronouncing those meaningless invitations to call that pass current in society, but rather knew pretty well when to expect this one or that, such a method proved rarely or never inconvenient. Casal was delighted with this facility of access.

"Nothing to conceal!" he thought, pressing the electric button on the double red-curtained doors. "I hope she is alone," he added, as the footman conducted him through the grand salon into the boudoir beyond—silent witness, the preceding night, of the Count Henry de Poyanne's tirade against him.

No sooner was the door thrown open than, at the first glance, he saw Juliette reposing, rather than sitting, in a huge easy-chair, in a snowy robe trimmed with airy lace, which set off her spiritual style of beauty admirably. Right in front of her, seated on a low fauteuil, and conversing with her in confidential tones, as though he was at home, sat D'Avançon. Casal and the diplomat had met frequently at the *Petit Cercle*, where the old beau often went to air his faded physiognomy and collate particulars of the most recent society scandal—a sort of French Paul

Pry without the Englishman's benevolence. The gilded youth of the Rue Royale made fine fun of the snuffy old fellow that was always girding at the evil education and worse pleasures of the day. At fifty-five D'Avançon was as *empressé* with women as if the date had been '47 instead of thirty years later. This was the man that never smoked after dinner, so that he might be the more with the ladies, seated now in full enjoyment of an interview with the very person Raymond came to see, where he will talk in tones that scarcely stir the air. If you find him installed in a house which you enter for a *tête-à-tête*, you may wait as long as you have patience, but you will not make D'Avançon budge for all your waiting. You cannot "choke him off," as impatient suitors have it. The elderly ex-diplomatist was a type that lovers abominate.

Casal's first thought was to wish the widow's ancient admirer at the devil, probably arguing that his tame twaddle and pre-adamite anecdotes were more suited to the ear of the mother than to the beautiful Juliette.

"Here's a fossil 'pull back,'" he said to himself, inelegantly. "I *know* the old bore; steel-coated bullets would fall flat against his hide. *Allons!* this visit is a loss of valuable time."

"Casal, Raymond Casal, *here!*" cried D'Avançon to himself. "Aha! I must charge myself with keeping order, that's certain." And even while he was pump-handling the new-comer's hand, his surprise was so great that he was forced to break out with: "Is it possible, my old friend" (to Juliette), "that you knew this bad boy, and I wasn't aware of it?"

"I had the honor of being introduced to Madame de Tillière at the Countess de Candolle's," responding for the

lady to whom D'Avançon made the remark. He had taken in the fact that Juliette herself was scarcely capable of answering, so excessive had been her surprise at his unexpected apparition. This evidence of emotion did not fail to make up to him for the contretemps of the presence of the old nuisance. It was no longer necessary for him to wrestle with his own interpretations of yesterday's happenings, nor to interrogate Prosny or Mosé, the Countess or Candolle. Such and so sudden a change of countenance—for she was blushing to the very roots of her hair—was surely a sign of preoccupation of the heart, especially in a woman of society, with whom uninterrupted mastery of their own faces is held as much a necessary virtue as courage in face of the enemy is with soldiers. How could women exist unless they were accustomed to master the outward signs of their emotions, surrounded as they are with eyes that will interpret their every change of visage as malignly as the judge who interrogates the criminal in the dock?

But Juliette had, since the evening before, gone through the hard experience of so many anxious sleepless hours that it was not surprising if her nerves, at such a trying moment, proved weaker than her will.

After having, in answer to her self-propounded question about Henry, twenty times told herself "I love him still," and thirty times admitted that she loved him not, the widow had felt somewhat as though she had stumbled over a precipice, and been caught by a tree in the fall, out of the reach of mortal help, although beyond the danger of immediate death.

During almost the entire night, as Casal was sleeping the sleep of a healthy child, as Poyanne for his part was

half aware in overshadowed dreams of the bereavement he was upon the eve of suffering, Juliette was shedding salt tears on her little cot, witness, in former days, of her innocent imaginings and of the happy premonitions of lost girlish days.

But why, in the midst of all this misery, caused by the canker in what once was daily love for Henry; why, in the deepest depth of these *suspiria de profundis*, was she forced to admit the obtrusive image of a man whom she had never spoken to till the night before, who was doubtless far enough from thinking similarly, if at all, of her, or so she imagined? Why was the late-coming and unrefreshing sleep of the morning disturbed by the same apparition?

It must have been the case that Casal had made a very deep impression upon her, because his image had been interwoven with her every thought since Juliette quitted the Hôtel de Candolle. But in what delicate terms could a conscientious father confessor describe the nature of this impression, how give it a name, without scandalizing the modesty of nature?

Should she admit that Casal, this notorious evil-liver, had awakened in her, by his mere presence of an hour, an obscure desire for his society for life? Could it be that this man represented to her, who perhaps had never yet met anybody capable of drawing her affections entirely out of herself, a certain physical *beau ideal*, an ideal that for every woman must necessarily vary as she herself varies from the common type? The imaginary confessor might very well have warned Juliette, at the best, to beware of putting herself in the way of a man who had evidently the power of picking the lock of her spirit so

easily, especially as the foundation on which she had so long rested her heart was beginning to fail her.

She had begun the day by an humble petition to the higher powers to give her strength to continue to do her duty, and it was with the calmness of resignation, which rewards every honest mortified spirit, that she was listening to D'Avançon's tittle-tattle as Casal entered—surprising her into a sudden spasm of emotion, the source of which she could scarcely any longer disguise from herself. No sooner, however, had Madame de Tillière recovered her composure than, with a gracious gesture to the new-comer, she resumed her seat, and folding the long train of her boudoir dress round her feet, replied to Raymond's question as to whether she did not feel well:

"I rose unwell, indeed, this morning. A terrible headache, which I can only account for on the supposition that there is thunder in the air. I thought it would have disappeared at midday, but the pain is no better."

Juliette took up a tiny bottle of perfumed salts from her work-box, and sniffed it gently as she spoke, as though very civilly to signify: "You see, monsieur, it is impossible for you to stay very long."

But what mattered the coldness of this little turn of humor on her part when he knew it was but assumed? What signified the manifest ill-temper of D'Avançon, who stood with one elbow on the mantel, fixing his eye-glasses more securely astraddle of his nose, and scanning with semi-impertinent attention the table of contents of the last number of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, perched for his convenience against the looking-glass? . . . What did all this by-play matter when he, Casal, had just made

the delicious discovery that his presence was sufficient to cause the charming widow to exhibit a discomposure that could be traced to one thing only? That deep blush, complemented by a deathly pallor, her gentle reception of his endeavors to please her the night before, coupled with her unwarrantable chilliness to him now, without any new development—all these were a balm to the spirit of the eager Casal, that more than made up for the immediate awkwardness. It is quite possible that had he found in the pretty boudoir of the Rue Matignon, bright now with the afternoon April sun instead of darkened by Juliette's supposititious thunder-cloud, a brisk and laughter-loving lady, dressed for visiting and chattering of the last piece at the Français, of the coming races for the *Prix de Paris*, and the latest thing out in the way of family skeletons, he might have murmured with a sober sigh:

"*Allons!* all women are the same at heart!" and concluded:

"It was hardly worth while my putting off the Anroux for this entertainment."

But the atmosphere of seclusion that was spread round Juliette like some rare Arabian Nights perfume, the enigmatic nature of her character and sentiments—first so clearly curious to become acquainted with him, then drawing back within her shell, resolved to avoid him; next this singular scene, which he could only interpret as an artificial coyness—every circumstance connected so far with Madame de Tillière excited to the utmost the curiosity of this *blasé* pleasure-seeker. The 'man of action' in his nature, fretting at inaction, roused itself, as at the gambling table, when a new arrival sought to bluff the

company, himself included, or when he heard the ramping of his first tiger.

Meanwhile, Juliette was beginning one of those syrup-and-water colloquies, without rhyme or reason in them, which have caused so many novelists and dramatists to satirize the twaddling propensities of society.

"Madame d'Arcole looked her very best last night, did she not?"

"White suits her splendidly," said Casal.

"It was her turn of good looks," put in D'Avançon, shutting up his *Reveu*, and delicately returning his eye-glasses to their especial repository. "You remember, *chère amie*, how horribly worn and yellow she was looking when we met her at the exhibition in the Rue de Sèze. . . . *À propos*, when am I to call for you to take you to see the *tapisserie* we were speaking of just now?"

"Away with you, old dotard," thought Casal, as the ex-diplomat went on about his carpets, and their expected round of the magazines, "take all the pains in the world to tell me I am one too many, and that you are the cock of the walk. That will not prevent me from coming back. And you, my pretty madame! You are very anxious to have me believe that your whole soul is on your lips just now. Luckily for me, I am persuaded that you are playing a charming comedy, half attention, half head-ache; you are really exceedingly charming, with your white hand on your temple, as though it ached so very, very badly, my poor dear!"

He put in a word, however, now and again, letting, as the evening before, the conversational foot of Hercules peep out from under the *toga virilis*, now and again showing his good sense and acuteness of judgment. Although

he had never purchased objects of art merit with any more serious intent than giving them away the next day to one or other of his numerous friends, he had often talked, as we have hinted, with men of profound art knowledge, and was able to enjoy the malicious satisfaction of correcting one or two of D'Avançon's errors on the marks of certain bits of porcelain.

"You have given your mind to pottery and collecting, monsieur?" asked Madame de Tillière.

"Not the least in life," said Casal, smiling at the idea. "But I have had a friend or two who was taken that way, and I kept my ears open in their company."

"He a collector of china!" interposed D'Avançon. "It is easy to see you have only known the gentleman for four and twenty hours."

Ironically proceeding in a tone that revealed his hidden anger at Casal's presence—a common enough phenomenon amongst men of fifty odd who are not willing to admit that they are jealous, and still are very much so—and with a childish resentment, without having any right to either of the three feelings, he continued:

"You are hardly aware, madame, what the typical young men of the day 'go in for,' if you believe this one capable of anything more serious than '*chic*' and sport. . . . This fine specimen, as you see," waving his encased eye-glass on its gold chain at Casal, "is unusually intelligent. I have known him from the cradle. . . . Ah, yes! he made his *début* at the club just as I returned from my mission to Florence. . . . Gifted!—why, yes; he could draw caricatures, play Offenbach, speak Spanish, and understood English and Russian. . . . You would be able to gauge his wonderful memory if you could hear

him discoursing with his friends. 'Do you think Farewell or Livarot will come in first to-morrow at Auteuil? . . . Which champagne did you go in for at dinner, to-day, old pal? Pommery-Greno or Pieper Heidsieck? . . . Machault shot off a handicap with Wérekowski; he took twenty points and a licking. . . . Who takes the bank to-night at baccarat?' . . . Not another topic, madame. Casal couldn't sing another song to save his neck!" . . .

"Isn't he spiteful?" Casal said amiably, when D'Avançon had finished; "isn't he a splendid old griffin?" And as he rose to take his leave, he brought his rather heavy hand down on the diplomat's padded shoulder with a gay familiarity that was at once an answer and a snub to these reproaches, treating the preacher as though he had been a hobbledehoy. "*Allons!*" he persisted, "don't go on saying naughty things of me to Madame de Tillière when my back is turned; and you, madame, you may safely take my word for it that much you may be told of me will be apocryphal!"

"I will wager a new tile she will lead him a dance for five minutes on my account," he said as he walked away down the Rue Matignon to the Elysées. "That's all he will get for his pains—a good 'wigging.' 'Let him play the fool,' *another* time, 'nowhere but in 's own house'!" And he made a motion as though he was prodding Polonius d'Avançon under the fifth rib.

"But the question is, how am I to approach her again? And soon!" Then, after a minute's reflection: "I must have a little talk with Madame de Candolle."

"Indeed, I think you have been exceedingly unkind to Monsieur Casal," Juliette was saying at the same moment to D'Avançon. "What have you got against him?"

"I? against Monsieur Casal? Why, not the least thing in the world. These *viveurs* are not my affinity, however. I object to them on principle. *Voilà tout!* But you are suffering?" said D'Avançon, ill disguising his embarrassment.

"Yes," said Juliette, again leaning back in the easy-chair and half shutting her eyes; "I shall be forced to go to bed. I must get well by dinner-time; my cousin De Nançay and Monsieur Poyanne are coming."

She was not telling the truth about herself, however, for her head was no more in agony than when her new friend interrupted her quiet conversation with Polonius, who, she saw, was in a humor to go on talking for a fortnight—and Juliette already could not bear to listen to anything fresh against "our Casal."

At dinner, when her mother questioned her before Poyanne about her engagements and guests of the day, she vouchsafed only D'Avançon's name, with not a mention of the other. It was certain, however, that this other, whom she had made up her mind on no account to allow again across her threshold, was occupying the lion's share of her imagination, for she had even shown a most unusually callous front to De Poyanne's affectionate farewell, pronounced to Juliette when they were alone.

"Yes, Juliette," he sighed, "I leave to-morrow morning—and for perhaps six weeks. I shall take advantage of the opportunity to reconstruct the Journal representing our opinions—the opinions of the Right."

"I trust you will carry your candidates," said she, not being able to find one word of regret for her unhappy lover. She failed to interpret the glance of anguish he threw her for sending him away from her side for so long

without one of those rose-leaf pressures of the mouth that send the smiling suitor into exile with a shibboleth of consolation, enabling him to murmur in his grief with Herrick :

> "These kisses on thy lips I set,
> Not that they are so pleasant,
> But that thou mayest pay the debt
> When I once more am present."

. . . . . .

But oh ! how far more bitter had been the parting could Count Henry de Poyanne have guessed the temptations to which he was relinquishing the woman who was and would remain so dear, so infinitely dear, to him for all the moments of his life, the rare and lovely "phantom of delight," whom he loved so utterly, without possessing either the crude courage or the crystal tact to make clear to her the fulness of his affection !

V.

"GIVE HIM AN INCH."

"Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte."
—*French proverb.*

WHEN Casal hit on the Countess de Candolle as a likely helpmeet in his project of laying siege to Juliette's heart, he reckoned on Gabrielle's sympathy, which he instinctively felt was his, and on the irresistible *penchant* that impels romantic women to intermeddle in the love-affairs of such of their friends as appear unhappy or too innocent to help themselves. His own part in the comedy that was to be rung up did not appear to him a difficult one. . . . But *would* it prove a comedy?

In spite of Casal's assurance that he had touched Juliette's feelings, after the visit he had just paid, he found, on taking thought, that there were so many elements of uncertainty in his position toward her that behind his exhilaration he felt all day a strange disquietude. At the Salle des Mirlitons, where he shot off a match with the Russian, he showed an eccentricity on the target that quite astonished his particular friends. At dinner with two hail-fellows from the club, invited by him to the Café Anglais so that there should be no fear of being short of company to keep them in countenance, he was extremely taciturn, and still appeared preoccupied when they hauled him off to the circus to admire a new aerial

beauty who dived head foremost an incredible distance into the net, and performed other astonishing feats, besides seeking reputation at the cannon's mouth. To the frequenters of Phillips's, in whose midst he generally pulled up in the neighborhood of midnight, he looked so glum and glowering that they began to chaff him about the state of his vitals.

The next day, in proportion as the hour drew near when he might decently call on the Countess to talk to her about her friend Juliette, the obstacles between them loomed up larger; and it was with his heart in his mouth, and almost a schoolboy's timidity, that he rang the bell in the Rue Tilsitt—less than forty-eight hours after the dinner-party, less than twenty-four after his interview with Madame de Tillière, with old D'Avançon in the witness-box. This novel feeling of stage-fright in a man like Casal, whose path through life had been so far strewn with rosy triumphs, this sudden and unexpected sensation of shame, perhaps, might nevertheless please Gabrielle, and cause her to lend a favorable ear to his projects. But there was in the Countess's mind another feeling likely to forward his improvised suit.

Gabrielle de Candolle—we had better begin by praising the pretty Countess—was truly and disinterestedly fond of Juliette de Tillière. They met in the long ago as girls, at one of the dancing-parties that relieve the monotony of country castles, almost the sole authentic relics of the old noblesse of France. The families of Nançay and De Candolle, though their estates were five and twenty miles apart, began to visit from that day. After the war of 1870, which had so cruelly confined them to their mansions, and bereaved the Widow Tillière, the two women

were brought still more together. Gabrielle began to take her friend into her confidence about the great sorrow of her life. The two had shed those streaming tears upon each other's hearts that are half sweetened by true sympathy. This high exchange of pity between these noble-minded and affectionate women had woven festoons of devotion between them that might never more be sundered. Gabrielle detested Juliette's fondness for and admiration of Poyanne, in virtue of sufficiently complex perceptions.

In the first place, because Juliette never seemed to speak about Henry in an open and above-board manner. Gabrielle could easily see that there was an understanding between the two, but into its exact nature she was not permitted to pry. She told herself that Poyanne certainly loved Madame de Tillière, and that Juliette, on her side, was not indifferent to his admiration. Probably, if the Countess had been informed fully and freely of the secret compact of marriage that bound this romantic couple, she would not have nursed such an antipathy for their intimacy, whose mysterious nature irritated her and fed her jealous premonitions. The jealousy of friendship, let us admit. Who does not know this tantalizing and almost amusing form of susceptibility, from which even dumb animals are not exempt? Take the spaniel that sits at your hearthstone, impose upon the poor creature the presence of another plaything of its own species, and then divide your endearments equally between them; you will soon have occasion to note the vortex of jealousy and envy that upsets the mind of your old favorite. If the word *jealousy* had been whispered in Gabrielle's ear, she would have contemptuously scouted the insinuation.

Of all human passions jealousy appears to a noble spirit the basest and most hateful. But, alas! who can deny that it is at once the vice that most easily creeps into the recesses of the soul and is least readily recognized, while it is the commonest failing that mankind possesses; for its very source is in that part of our natures which makes us sociable beings? Envy fattens on comparisons. Did ever a half-starved painter envy an emperor his crown and carriages as acutely as he envies his fellow-painter over the way, who carried off a silver medal at the Academy when he only took a bronze one? Imagine two women, both handsome, dowered with youth and every gift of birth and fortune; suppose them knitted, as were these two, by the dearest links of friendship; yet while one is imprisoned, by the meshes of fate and her principles, in a miserable marriage, the other is free, when she meets him, to care for the man of her heart, and do you suppose that there will be no jealousy when comes divided love? At first it will take the form of instinctive antipathy for the man who causes the pain of contrasting sorrow with joy. Soon she begins to justify her dislike by finding out and exaggerating the faults and failings of her friend's friend; she regards him with the squint eye of malevolence that would see sensuality in Marcus Aurelius, and egotism in Vincent de Paul. Thus Madame de Candolle had made out to her own satisfaction that the Count was one of the most pragmatic of individuals, simply because the great orator, haunted by the world unseen, and devoured by love for his life-work, had a habit of talking politics. She accused him of being a tyrant, because at every turn Juliette refused this or that invitation of hers in order to pass the evening or to

dine with Henry. Thus, by skipping all intermediary arguments, she jumped to the conclusion, in good faith, that if this marriage ever took place, it would be the undoing of Juliette. With regard to Poyanne she had made up her mind. "'I do not like thee, Doctor Fell,'" she would quote, one-third in jest and two in earnest. Of course, Juliette, with that tendency to maintain an atmosphere of profound peace around her which was one of her leading traits, kept a bridle on her lips lest by chance Gabrielle's antipathy should reach the Count to pain him, the latter in no degree suspecting what an adversary he had in the handsome Countess. On the other hand, he admired her for her high birth, her unsullied honor, and the purity of her religious faith. He bewailed the fact of her marriage with such a vulgar *titulaire*. He *felt* the warmth of Gabrielle's love for Juliette, and used to say:

"In her you have a friend for life."

Such silent delicacy is far from disarming those who hate us; in fact, the usual result is fresh hostility. Every thinker who has moralized upon such matters has sighed over this saddest delinquency of the human soul—the last thing we can forgive in man or woman is that they have caused us pangs of conscience because we have wronged them; above all, when these injuries are sentimental wrongs that we can hardly ourselves define. If Madame de Candolle had seen in Poyanne an open enemy, his hostility would have angered her less than his eternal deference. It is related of Beethoven that he abruptly left an otherwise convenient lodging because the landlord made him two profound salaams on entering. He was too civil. Gabrielle went still further, at such times as she

felt uncommonly spiteful, and accused the Count of hypocrisy. Who knows? Perhaps her spirit, racked by the mad misery of her unhappy marriage, suffered still further through a third comparison, the contrast between the embruted man of title whose name she bore, and the eloquent, laborious, benevolent gentleman who stood in Juliette's good graces. Does it need any further explanation to account for the cordial reception Casal's plan of campaign met with in the Rue Tilsitt?

Gabrielle was seated by a flower-covered centre-table in the salon-boudoir where she received her intimates, writing a batch of the society letters with which women of her rank amuse their solitude. Her carriage had been ordered for half-past two. Two o'clock, and the bell rings. It is probably the upholsterer to interview the Countess about the furniture for the summer pavilion they have added to the mansion. Two rings; it is a visitor. She thinks she ought to have denied herself. "*Tiens!*" said she aloud; "*c'est toi*, Casal! Here's fortune." And then to herself: "Why does he come to see *me*, this gentleman who hardly ever visits?"

"Our Casal" responded with a vague smile not free from shamefacedness: "I wanted a word with Candolle about a horse, if he wants to replace the roadster that ran away with you. I knew that you were here, and so I came up-stairs. Am I in the least putting you out, Countess?"

"Certainly not," she answered; "it is not so easy to get you out of your shell." And then the conversation, starting thus plausibly, veers round to the dinner-party of two days ago. Gabrielle pronounced the name of the fair widow. She recognized the light of curiosity in Casal's eyes, and

that his lips involuntarily half opened, as they do when one is about to hazard some important question.

"It is all clear!" she said to herself. "I have you, my gentleman. You came to talk to me about Juliette."

At such moments as these woman is in her element, charming in kittenish grace, feeling her way to your mental pulse with the nicest acumen; till such time as in your innocence you blurt out and blazon forth your interest in the *other* lady. Her first movement of curiosity is to look up sideways at you, like an amiable parrot, and then her attention is buried in her busy eyes. If she was writing, she now holds her pen in the air. If she wasn't writing, and is near the desk, she will take up a pen or a book, and seem engaged. Then she will throw a little phrase into the conversational cauldron—quite a tiny feathery word—to the ear. It is with such witcheries that an evil-disposed woman is able to poison the fountain of your passion by one of those still, small "People say a *lot* of things, you know," which serve as vehicles for the most atrocious libels. She will name you, with a set smile that is tranquillity itself, the name of the gentleman who, "it is *supposed*," was the last to figure on the lists of the woman of your heart. And then she will go on: "What, did you not know *that?* I should have thought these things were common property." All these little speeches will no doubt be counted against them in another world.

On the other hand, women who are good-natured, but disposed to scent out a tale of love as a cat a saucer of milk, deploy their sweetest diplomacy to get themselves into your confidence. You become, as it were, the milestone of their sighs. They tender you the privilege of sharing a secret that is not yours to divide, only to rue it the

moment you move away from their mesmeric sphere. Of all the tricks they have to turn you inside out the most hackneyed but not the least acute is to speak aloud the thing that is on the tip of your tongue, to give your thoughts a local habitation and a name. It is the surest way for the charmer to get at the truth of you. We must allow that men, as a rule, fall easy victims to the feminine inquisitor. It was in this very way that Casal came out with the name of the lady on his mind:

"*À propos* of Madame de Tillière, how is she? Have you seen her since yesterday morning?"

"No, I have not," said the Countess. "I do not add, How about yourself? Unmannerly boor as we all know you, I will guarantee to certify you have not so much as left your card!"

"Guarantee nothing of the kind," cried Raymond, triumphantly. "You would perjure yourself. I went one better than merely leaving a bit of pasteboard. I paid her a visit with all the honors!"

"Well, you were logical," said Gabrielle. "My little friend is a lump of delight, as witty and sympathetic as though she failed of prettiness; distinguished and attractive as though she had no other graces. I am almost in love with her myself. And she is the best of women, Raymond Casal. Assure yourself, my friend, that there are *some* good women in the world. It will do you ever so much good to cultivate their acquaintance. And what did you two find to talk about?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing," almost sighed Casal. "I ask no better fate than to be allowed to put to the test what you have just told me. Unhappily, the good women occupy the most sequestered niches in life's cathedral. I

meet you, alone, you, madame—" And Casal bowed profoundly. "I have not had the chance to see anything of your friend, as yet. Who do you think was there when I gained admittance?"

He stopped with the query. With any other but Gabrielle he might have reckoned the answer would come like an echo, "Her lover?"—that is, always supposing she had one.

But had Juliette a lover?

Raymond had been turning over this question in his waking hours for two days, and he would have been doomed to a bad five minutes if the Countess's reply had been: "Why, So-and-so, of course!" But these paltry treasons, the false currency of feminine friendship, were not to Gabrielle's fancy. She merely nodded ignorance.

"D'Avançon!" cried Casal, obliged to answer his own question. "You must admit that for a first visit it was hardly an overwhelming attraction. To mend matters, the dear old man treated me to a mouthful of his best bitter aloes—hauled me over the coals without any mercy. Imagine the attack on my reputation made as soon as I bowed myself out. Madame de Tillière will refuse to bow to me the next time we see each other in the Bois!" . . .

"And what would that matter to your lordship?" smiled Gabrielle, slyly.

"What would it matter to me? Is it a pleasant thing to be pointed out as a sort of medley between a monkey and a jockey, with a little touch of the wild boar thrown in as a make-weight? I give you my word of honor, that was the impression this Parisian Polonius meant to convey."

"What did you say to it all?"

"Oh! I couldn't well seem put out, could I, considering it was my first visit, with a friend of the house? But will you do me a good turn, Countess?"

"I think I see you," laughed Gabrielle. "I must tell Juliette that you deserve a better halfpenny-worth of tar than *that!* But you have yourself to blame. Why do you not oftener—I should rather say, sometimes—look in as you pass by? Why do you spend twenty-three hours out of the twenty-four with a band of gamblers buffoons, libertines, adventuresses, who are clinging on to your coat-tails only to drag you down to demoralization? Why do you not tell me," she added, seriously, "that all this has nothing to do with me?"

"Ah! madame," said Casal, feelingly, taking her hand and warmly kissing it; "if there were only a few more women in society like you!" . . .

"*Allons!*" said she, tearing her hand from his embrace, and shaking her finger; "you flatter me without rhyme or reason. . . . It is your wish that I should find you an occasion to justify yourself with my pretty friend, after the mud shower-bath Monsieur D'Avançon treated you to? Very well, come and pay me a visit in my box at the Opera, to-morrow, Friday."

"But what if Juliette is angry with me for inviting Casal?" thought Gabrielle, after he was gone. . . . "How foolish of me. Was she not put out the other evening, when he disappeared? Why, she will be only too delighted. And if she amuses herself a little while her politician is away, where is the harm? At any rate, *he* is free to marry. Marriage—Casal? Casal married! What an idea! . . . But why not? He is rich, well-related, young—young in heart, despite his indifferent life

and worse reputation. Did he not speak prettily of her just now, almost with a blush? What has the boy missed? Nothing but decent influences. . . . But what will De Poyanne think when he hears of these double meetings, one after another? . . . What does it matter to anybody what Poyanne thinks?"

In spite of this fine chain of reasons, and even though this hypothetical offer of marriage continued to float through her mind, it was with small assurance on Friday night that the Countess said to Juliette in the closed carriage that was taking them to the Opera:

"*À propos,* I forgot. . . . I have invited Casal into our box. That will not put you out?"

"Why should it?" answered Juliette.

The words were few and simple, but there was a little tremor in them that did not escape Gabrielle's fine ear, knowing as she did the inflections of her friend's voice. She waited for some reference to the visit of the Rue Matignon, but in vain. Juliette's embarrassment and silence showed anything but indifference to the man she had only seen twice. Since the visit she had, in fact, done nothing but think of Casal; but with profound loyalty to the Count, she had set up side by side with the image of the new-comer in her mind the memory of her accepted lover. "How glad I am," she thought, "that I received the other coolly. He will never call here again. It would have been so awkward to have to tell Henry all about him in my letters. He is so hard on the poor man. And D'Avançon harder still." She remembered the ex-diplomatist's tirade. "I do not believe his detractors tell the truth.

"No, they do not tell the truth. Gabrielle sees things

more clearly. He has been brought up to pluck the flowers of evil. . . . He has had nobody to love him." . . . [Juliette was treading on very dangerous ground.] "Nobody to love! What a pity it all is! . . . But what can be done? How lucky I have not got to meet him again. He would have begun to play at making love to me. Even his visit, so soon, and without an invitation, was hardly the correct thing. But I must say *he* behaved admirably, and D'Avançon abominably. If he had found me alone, I wonder, I *wonder*, how the interview would have ended."

At this interjected idea a little shiver of fear crept round her heart.

"Why should I think of such things? It is all over. He will never call again." . . .

And now this most imprudent bosom friend of Juliette's was leading her straight into the lion's den!

"But I thought," said she, hastily, "that you seldom or never saw Monsieur Casal except at hunt dinners?"

"True enough," smiled Gabrielle. "All the same, he came to see me yesterday, and he looked—miserable!"

"What about?" asked Juliette.

"Did he not call upon you as well?" put in Madame de Candolle, "and was not D'Avançon with you?"

"I do not see the connection," said Juliette, put out of countenance to find that Gabrielle knew of Casal's visit to the Rue Matignon.

"Simple enough!" returned the Countess. "It seems that D'Avançon whipped him over hill and dale."

"You know the poor man's way," cried Juliette, affecting to laugh; "he is jealous, as men of his age come to be, and new faces please him not."

"Anyhow, Casal went away with the idea that you had breathed in a most horrible opinion of him; and he came to me to pour out his sorrows to a sympathetic ear. . . . You have frightened him out of his wits, I assure you. I wish you could have seen him, with his boy talk: '*Do* take my part with your friend.' Go away with you! You would have been as sorry for him as I was. . . . I have asked him to-night so that he may take his own part, by the only method in his power. . . . What would you have? You know how much I am interested in him. I think it is a shame to see a man of so much promise fall into the clutches of people fathoms beneath him. And as he seems to be of our opinion, why not try to draw him up into *our* world? Isn't that your idea of Christian charity?"

Juliette answered evasively. She could not, would not, show Gabrielle the nervous excitement the proposed visit was causing her. It is possible that, without knowing it, she had hoped Casal might turn up. She tried to think to the contrary, and yet knew that, in the midst of her strange terror, the thought that she would see her visitor again so soon was not displeasing.

The Countess, trying to justify her invitation, had unwittingly used the most insinuating line of argument she could have invented, for with a romantic woman the phrases "What a pity!" and "What a shame it is!" go very far. Especially when they chimed so well with Juliette's own reflections. It was through the little rift of pity in her heart that her first affection for Henry de Poyanne had percolated, which, slowly growing, let in the flood of love before she was aware.

The thought that Casal was now suffering tortures of

remorse, and all the rest of it, for the disorders of his life, and that better influences might draw the unfortunate back to happier days—what a prospect, what a temptation, to try and constitute herself this influence! Not that these thoughts passed through Juliette's troubled mind in so many words, but she listened to her conscience:

"*This* time I shall not be able to conceal from Poyanne that I have seen Casal!"

It was Juliette's habit, whenever the Count was absent from Paris, to inscribe him every night a sort of letter diary of her life and of her thoughts. As she entered the De Candolle box, this was the last thought that was uppermost in Juliette's mind.

There he was, with De Candolle and D'Artelles, scanning the Opera House through his glasses. As he rose to salute her there was nothing of that expression in his eyes of one who wishes to signify, "You see, I have managed to meet you again in spite of all you could do," but, on the contrary, rather a timid, suffering look. Since Madame de Candolle's invitation, this master of the Parisian ceremonies hardly knew his own reflection in the glass. Instead of evaporating, his inquietude grew denser. He said to himself, spite all experience, "Madame de Tillière will be truly disgusted to see me here. She will think I am foisting my presence on her; and if D'Avançon laid the last straw on my reputation, I am a lost man."

This anxiety changed into something like torture when she swept past him, to take her place in front of the commodious box, gracious, chilly, and gently distant. What a change in those eyes and that face, that betrayed such welcome confusion at sight of him the day before!

For the first time the full evidence of the sentiment

that dominated his once frivolous mind confronted Raymond Casal.

It was no longer a question of amusing himself with a flirtation.

Casal was in love.

. . . . . .

As he himself inelegantly phrased it, dropping into his habitual slang:

"It is all up with me. *Je suis 'pincé'!*"

The opera was "Hamlet," by Ambroise Thomas, rather poorly represented. The fine singer who played Ophelia was surrounded by a company of third-rate artistes; and Casal could hear criticisms whispered round, such as: "Oh! what a villanous Player King! I wonder how the Player Queen could poison her husband for such a man." . . . "Who is that in Madame Bonnivet's box? Saint-Luc, by all that's gracious!" . . . "I want to know if that is an actor now on the stage, or a ghost." . . . "Of course, a singer and an actor. Does he not move his mouth and his feet?" "Look, in Madame Komoff's box, there is the Princess Moranini. Is she not beautiful?" "As a model for a wax-doll, dear boy, do you mean?" "Look at poor Ophelia; no wonder she went mad with such a tuneless Hamlet!" and so on.

Then these diamond-crowned sphinxes, so startling an array of splendor and beauty to the eyes of the student, tutor, or provincial who has come out in full evening dress for that occasion only, with the disconcerting contradictoriness that makes the Parisian woman a miracle of changeability, would suddenly cease flapping their fans, and, programme in hand, set themselves to follow

the music and dwell upon the situation. Of a sudden the house is hushed, and the stop, the diapason of the human heart, that the composer wished to touch with his melodious wand is thrilled at last. It is Ophelia's great scene, and Madame de Candolle whispers for herself and for her friends:

"Listen!"

The audience was silent.

In this fourth act of "Hamlet" there is a celestial ballad, the air of which, so they say, the French composer borrowed from a sweet old folk-song of Brittany. Unceasing weird and plaintive harmonies of happiness lost and home unfound seem to haunt Ophelia throughout this scene, while at her side gently sing and softly dance the other occupants of the stage. It is the ever-vivid contrasts similar to those distinguished in real life, of gayety struggling for precedence with melancholy, of tears smoothing away the wrinkles of laughter, that affect the imagination and focus the attention of the most careless on what is passing on the boards.

Thousand-spangled spring is with us, the kindly azure showers fresh life on every head of clover, the eyes of lovers are jewelled with the pearls of joy. Every mouth is a-smile to drink in the placid influences of the day and of the hour; all but the deserted girl respond to the lovely pristine melody of nature.

Then speaks the cruel prince: "Get thee to a nunnery—go!"

Through the golden mist of others' heart-sunshine, Ophelia's own irreparable wretchedness looms intolerably black.

"Ah!" she sighs out in song:

> "Heureuse l'épouse au bras de l'époux!"
> ("Oh, happy wife upon her husband's arm!")

and with a sob more plaintive than Eurydice's, her reason vanishes forever.

But, no; she argues it is impossible that she has been betrayed. The prince, *her* prince; Hamlet, *her* Hamlet, lives, and all will yet be well. Lonely now, away from him, like a lily bruised and waterless, it seems to her, after all, that Hamlet must be really dead.

She walks to the sad flood that flows and flows, and offers such a gentle couch to rock her brain to blank oblivion. All you happy ones, for each of whom she has plucked a flower from her bouquet, and a sweet speech from her heart, do not stand in her way! Let her fatal footsteps still trend to the shining water, less deceitful than the heart of man, less unstable than hope, less fugitive than the hour of joy; there let her drown her memory of happy, happy days; drown, though it has a soul, her own imperishable love. "Adieu, adieu!" she gasps to Hamlet's remembrance—"adieu, my only friend!" Let life continue to laugh around her limpid grave, and spring to be a spendthrift of its gleams and its perfumes. The suffering spirit sleeps for evermore.

. . . . . .

The strange and piercing charm of the music was that it seemed to hold the symbolism of all these sentiments as it were in a magnificent trance. This grand tone-poem, therefore, pleased the most diverse intellects. As the simple and beautiful motive of the ballad fainted away, only to be replaced by innumerable chime-shadows of itself, the groupings on the stage appeared to express all

CASAL AND JULIETTE AT THE OPERA.

the complexity of the situation, and Ophelia's distraction leaping out of chaos seemed to crystallize in strange but glittering angles of new sympathy. Curious as the statement may seem, every one of the occupants of the Countess's box experienced an emotion differing from that of the others, but in harmony with the theatrical impression. Gabrielle, who had only to turn her head to behold Madame Bernard, her rival, retraced in the last sigh of Ophelia a little of the pain that clouded all her life. Into Juliette's heart the melody poured like a flood of invisible tears, sweeping away her bitter resolutions to keep Casal at bay. Casal himself, already carried off his feet by the romantic influence of a first love at thirty-six, for the first time forgot his quillets about the price of operatic noise, and let his soul float out into the hereafter on Ophelia's drowning trills. So near the object of his newly awakened respect and affection, he felt his spirits rise with the music to a state of ecstasy in contemplation of a fairy future. So near to her, with her fair hair gathered into a Psyche knot on top of her shapely head, her expressive throat nearly as white as the plaits of her white robe that served to continue the line of beauty, her classical profile now lighted with the vivid glow of admiration, with the subtile aroma of Persian lilies that surrounded her—so near and still so far from friendship.

Yet he saw, and noted, that she was at that moment one in spirit with himself.

Could he but have said a single word to her at that instant, he would have been able to find out whether or not her sentiments were caged, whether or not the interest she had shown for him at each previous interview had wilted, and was dead and buried.

But could that happen in so short a time?

. . . . . .

The door of the box opens, the enchantment of the stage illusion vanishes. It is Mosé, who cordially grasps De Candolle's hand, and Madame de Candolle rises to talk to the new arrival; they sat together at the back in animated conversation.

And now De Candolle and D'Artelles stroll out. It is Casal's one opportunity.

"Will she rise from where she is?" thinks Raymond.

And Juliette is thinking, "It is my duty to avoid even five minutes of half *tête-à-tête* with this man."

But she remained in her fauteuil, affecting to scrutinize the house anew through her lorgnette.

In the mirror that garnished the back of the box she had caught a glimpse of Casal's face, dark with the emotion of a lover's dread, and Juliette felt all her tenderness of the first interview revive in her at sight of that naturally haughty face now drawn and set with timidity, the sentiment of all others that disarmed her suspicions and called her heart from home. Her nerves, still throbbing with the recent music, rendered any exertion of her will unusually difficult, and with her whole soul at attention, for which even at that supreme moment she was sorry, she remained.

Casal was speaking to her. It was now too late to rise. How could she affront her friend's guest by not replying to him? And why should she?

"The act was lovely," said Raymond, "and for its sake I can almost forgive the composer for laying hands on 'Hamlet,' although I hate to see the grand old plays

made mincemeat of by new musicians. You ought to see this play of Shakespeare's in London, played by Henry Irving. Have you seen him act, madame?"

"I have never been in England," answered Juliette; and she thought, deliciously: "Gabrielle was quite right; I overawe him. Why?"

Casal's reserve lulled Juliette's conscience. Proof of how she charmed him, he continued to pour into her willing ear accounts of the great English actor, criticising in the most friendly way, his speech as always to the point, his gestures everywhere suitable, his intelligence ever adequate. He ceased; and with a smile:

"Admit, madame, that you think it a little absurd for a man like me to come out as a dramatic critic!"

"Why should *that* be?" asked Juliette. A fresh fear clutched her heart-strings. She was assuring herself that every phrase brought on a more familiar, and that the conversation was growing more dangerous every moment.

"Why?" responded Casal. "Why, if not side by side of the true portrait of me painted by Monsieur d'Avançon the other day?"

"I did not pay the least attention," said she, fanning herself in order to conceal her emotion. "I had such a headache! . . . Whither will he lead our words?" she thought.

"Yes," sighed Casal with a melancholy which was only half theatric. "But the first day that you are free from headache you will listen to him, and you will believe him, or somebody else with the same set of arguments. . . . I told Madame de Candolle yesterday, it is rather hard to be judged all one's life by the follies of one's

youth. . . . And it had seemed to me. . . . You will allow me to speak frankly?" . . .

She inclined her head.

He had presented this crucial dilemma to her with an almost childish grace of expression, a moving contrast when displayed to a woman by such a masculine man as Raymond Casal. He went on:

"I thought . . . it seemed to me . . . that you were not altogether pleased to have me in your house. It is true, you have not told me not to come."

"But," said Juliette, paralyzed by this method of fence that she was unable to understand in advance, "it is you who would be bored with my hospitality. I live in a little corner of the world far enough from all that could possibly be of interest to *you*."

"You observe!" cried Casal, "you listened to the Public Prosecutor in spite of your poor head! Well, I would like to hear from your own lips your authorization that I should sometimes be seen in the Rue Matignon, if it is only to try and make you alter your opinion on the case. That will be only fair?"

Casal at this moment was so handsome, his dilated eyes sparkling with hope and the multitudinous gleam of the great chandeliers, this conversation had been so swiftly pushed to a conclusion, that Juliette answered in her own despite:

"It will always give me great pleasure to see you."

It was the tritest phrase. But rendered thus, in response to Casal's demand, and after Madame de Tillière had promised herself to be so exceedingly discreet, this little invitation amounted to a weakness.

The highly emotional way in which Raymond Casal

murmured his thanks caused Juliette to comprehend in what light the young man interpreted her cession.

At last she felt the strength to rise and join Alfred Mosé and the Countess.

It was too late.

VI.

THE FLOWERY SLOPE.

"When pleasure calls we seldom count the cost—
And in its tangled copses soon are lost."
—*Kirke White.*

It was Juliette's custom of a night, when all the house was still and there was no one to disturb her, to taken pen in hand and write the diary of the day in letter form to Henry de Poyanne, her sweetheart.

On the evening after the scene described at the Opera she was seated at her own desk in her bedroom, surrounded by the welcome furniture and curious knick-knacks of her youth, by the portraits of father and mother, and photographs of friends—nothing to divert her attention but the monotony of the ticking clock and the pleasant purring of the lessening wood-flames, except, perhaps, the patter of the April rain; yet she found it hard indeed to make a beginning.

Juliette had the genius for correspondence which is daily disappearing from our ill-considered habits; there was a constant exchange of little notes between herself and friends, now in reference to some misunderstood phrase, again an inquiry about each other's health, an account of some new book or work of art, or simply in regard to some small commission. These myriad trifles

give women an excuse for embroidering the gray dead-level of worldly life with the fond flowers of most gracious fantasy. To her friends, to her promised husband, whenever the political exigencies of the day took him away from Paris, she was in the habit of covering interminable sheets, letting her pen glide over the smooth paper in a vain attempt to catch the flying thoughts. To-night all seemed different. Her reflections refused to precipitate themselves in black and white—in fact, they appeared obscure, if not indeed entirely formless.

Should she tell Henry of Casal, of the request that he had made, and of her answer?

"I owe it to him to do so," she cried aloud; and with an expression of firmness she began to write. At the expiration of half an hour she had covered a dozen sheets with a true and particular account of the simple events of the evening; of the encounter with Raymond Casal at the Opera, of the essentials of their conversation, and she concluded by saying that if this young man's presence in her house was disagreeable to Henry, a word from him would give her the cue to put a veto to his visits.

The letter finished, she re-read it, and mentally beheld Poyanne, in his turn, perusing it. She knew him far too well to doubt his answer. It was the grace of Henry's generous and nature-moulded mind that he aimed to rule in Juliette's heart by love, and not authority. He was one of those delicate lovers who virtually give their sweethearts their entire freedom from the first. Sustained, as they are, by the loftiest motives, these gallant men have sometimes to suffer for their kindness, for the footsteps of the women they allow thus to come and go

at their sweet will not infrequently trample their own affections in the dust. Their hearts bleed inwardly, without a plaint, and this mute suffering but vents itself in tender looks.

"What good to send him such a letter?" she exclaimed. "I will not send it." And then she threw the crumpled papers in the blaze, and watched the writhing folds consume in fitful sparks, and felt within her as one feels who has committed the first treason against righteous love.

But she was loath to relinquish her pretty habit of letting her confidences trickle over the inkstand, and once more she began to write, this time without mentioning Casal's name—pages filled with not very interesting or original matter, picked up she knew not where or how, and hurriedly sealed the new letter in its envelope, as though it had been a sort of tame scorpion, that might accidentally sting her if she was not careful.

"I know not why a trifling thing like this should worry me," she thought the next morning, in order to lull her conscience. "What earthly harm can there be in receiving a man who is the friend of Gabrielle and Madame d'Arcole? By what pretext could I have denied him his request to be allowed the common privilege of calling here? Gabrielle was right. He is only obeying a sentiment that does him honor. Monsieur Casal wishes to protest against the effect of D'Avançon's harangue on *me*—or *any* woman in my place. It is equivalent to a pledge of good behavior here, and that he will not fall a-courting me. . . . Visits, from time to time, that will but make him more respect the better portions of his character. . . . Even Henry himself would approve of them, if he knew their source, and I could pour their explanation in his ear.

Besides," she continued, glancing at a letter received from Besançon that very morning, "he is not troubling his head much just now about my concerns."

The Count's letter from his native town merely gave the story of his journey and arrival, and of the electioneering struggle that was going on. It looked as if he had purposely eliminated every sentimental subject. This timid lover, fearful of fatiguing his *fiancée* by too much tenderness, had himself written one, two, three letters, and destroyed them, in order to send her at the last a missive that would read indifferent. Juliette ought to have divined these scruples of the man she knew so well. But how seldom we give others the credit of having a soul as susceptible as our own!

She sighed and told herself:

"How he has changed! His letters used to be so full of love!"

She folded up the Count's clear and loyal handwriting, and slipped the sheets into their envelope and locked them sadly in her cedar desk. In her tender cult of the man whom she very justly considered as one of the great figures of the epoch, she had a pious way of taking care of all his notes and letters. The diminution of the love that was between them made Juliette very thoughtful. Mechanically she arranged the flowers that General de Jardes, who was travelling in Italy, had that morning sent her, dreaming of all the past. Red and white half-blown roses, tired with the journey; pale narcissus, drooping for the want of air; golden mimosa, pinks white and scarlet, Russian violets, mingled their sweet odors to please her, scarcely heeded. These poor flowers, still alive, revived with water, and as if in gratitude breathed out their souls

afresh in perfume, commingling, as no artificial scents will blend, into a breeze of Arcady that semi-consciously wafted Juliette's dreams to the land of sunshine and enchantment—Italy.

Stirred, still, by reflex waves of the profound emotion of the evening before, this invisible floral aroma flattered her, and superadded to her vague thoughts a strange and dreamy languor.

There are moments when our sympathy with flowers of the field and garden transcends pleasure, and penetrates the region of creative joy.

The bell rang. Juliette, with a start, lifted her eyes from admiration of these *chef-d'œuvres* of heaven's handiwork, to reflect : What if Casal should take advantage of my weak permission and walk in now, to find me in this state of agitation?

He would be asking this and that. . . . What should she answer? Happily, the open door displayed, not Raymond Casal, but Monsieur d'Avançon. So much was he occupied with some idea of his own that he remarked neither Madame de Tillière's pallor nor her trembling hands, nor the eloquent wet brightness of her eyes, those faithful Mercuries of love and fear.

"He is going to tease me about my last night at the Opera!" she told herself, after her first feeling of deliverance. And she went on patting the flowers into admired disorder with her soft white fingers, now almost gayly, glancing from her half-turned face appreciation of the conversational effects the old beau was so evidently full of. She knew him so well! . . .

One of his whims, she knew of old, was never to approach his point save by a roundabout. He thought it

due to his old trade of diplomacy to fend and fiddle with his thoughts as he brilliantined and cosmetiqued his scanty hairs, plastering each one in its place till his old skull was hirsute with black wax, then variegating his prickly mustache till it assumed the pepper and salt of middle age. At the beginning of an interview he would let slip a phrase which, half an hour later, would serve him as a graceful stepping-stone to his chief sentence. It did not take him quite so long to-day. Madame de Tillière was only half mistaken. It was indeed his intention of lugging in Casal. But D'Avançon was not aware of the events of the Opera. Juliette had handed him a large lemon-tinted anemone, glory of the sunny south, and was saying :

"You have not praised my flowers. It was the General who had the thoughtfulness to send them."

"And will he soon be back ?" asked the diplomatist. "Or do you think he will push on to Monte Carlo to try his fortune at the *rouge et noir ?*"

"It is quite on the cards that he may," said Juliette.

"That reminds me," put in D'Avançon, with an eagerness to step this fine plank of chatter which was a sure proof that he had set it up on end himself, "that I witnessed at the Rue Royale last night one of the biggest deals out of Bedlam. . . . You accuse me of being hard on Monsieur Casal. Do you know how much he lost at a sitting, between half-past twelve and one o'clock ? Give it a name ! What, you decline to guess ? Well, three thousand louis ! . . . What do you think of *that ?* No doubt he was fresh from one of the English bars where he and his friend Lord Bohun are in the habit of soaking the remnants of their brains in Irish whiskey, for the baron

was asleep on a sofa, and our monsieur looked extremely jolly. And then these young slips of Apollyon get into a temper when their elders, on rare occasions, try to instil into them a little sense!"

"But is Monsieur Casal so rich?" asked Juliette.

"His income was two hundred and fifty thousand francs *when he came of age.* With his questionable generosities, it is another matter, doubtless, *now!*"

It was a genuine triumph to D'Avançon to be able, with this pretty little anecdote, to prove to Juliette that his accusations were not to be regarded as so many calumnies. He continued holding forth against high play, believing fully that while his fair friend continued posing the vases of flowers and flitting about the room she was grievously touched at his recital.

"So, after leaving me at the Opera," she thought, "he turned to wine and cards?" In her opinion nothing could be simpler. Was she not well aware that Casal, like so many young men of the day, passed a great part of several evenings of the week at his club? Why did the idea of this now seem so hateful to her? Did she imagine that a few words exchanged with a man in a box at the theatre was going to change his habits by magic on account of words that had no earthly bearing on his ways of life? Had it been her secret inmost wish that he would retain so lively an impression of their conversation as to prevent him from profaning what was left of the night?

During all the rest of the day Juliette could not throw off these images of the disorderly life of the man about whom she knew as yet so little. She began to feel the growth of this strange temptation to be something nearer,

if not dearer, to him, under the pretence, at once specious and dangerous, of becoming his good angel. Thus was the foundation planned by Gabrielle de Candolle serving for a stately superstructure in the mind of Juliette. In his feeble attempt to hurt Casal's reputation, D'Avançon was furnishing these two beings, already so preoccupied with thoughts of one another, with a safe and common ground of communion. The most discreet, the most reserved woman may take to task a *viveur* about his passion for play, while she could scarcely scold him on the drink question without reviling him, or animadvert on his gallantries without compromising herself.

Thus when Casal, after the decent interval of two days, presented himself in the little Louis XVI. salon, his visit had been looked forward to with an amount of happy hope that Juliette had hardly dared to recognize. Madame de Tillière pretended then no headache, and no longer wore one of those fair, filmy robes that are the semi-consolation of the sick; she was in walking dress, and with her blond hair rolling freely underneath her bonnet, she had that youthful smile, those eyes at once candid but penetrating, soft yet sprightly, which formed her unique charm in presence of those to whom she condescended to unveil her inner nature.

Absorbed with precognitions of the things she was about to say, two velvety rose cloudlets glowed on her smooth cheeks, and her sapphire eyes sparkled with a vivacity that Casal had never seen in them before, as she said, after the first civilities were over:

"You want it thought that people tell untruths about you, yet you pass your evenings at the card-table. Do not tell me that it is not so! I have my secret police. You

lost, sir, more than sixty thousand francs on Saturday morning between twelve and one!"

"But by two o'clock the same morning I had won them all back again, with thirty thousand francs to boot!" cried Casal, laughing.

"Oh! that's still worse!" exclaimed Juliette, and then, conformably with her programme of Platonic friendship, she began a graceful little lecture, to which Raymond listened with a compunction that was only half-feigned —this scandalous and dashing Casal, who had viewed with complacency at the club, nay, at the drinking-bar, twenty times in his life, losses or winnings amounting to a hundred thousand francs; Casal, the master-spirit with apprentice libertines, the man whose flowers of evil the water-gilt youth of the period too proudly imitated for their moral buttonholes!

If they could see him now—these fire-eaters of Lutetia, who would drink themselves silly at Phillips's in order to have a chance of a chat with *ce diable de Casal*—seated *vis-à-vis* to a young and charming woman, listening humbly and patiently to a discourse on the elements of propriety!

"If I could subscribe for a quiet hour's talk with you for an hour a day, madame, I would gladly pay the price of abstention from the gambling-table for twelve months!"

"Pay your fine now, sir, all the same!" cried Madame de Tillière, with an air that was not all coquettish.

"It is your wish!" replied Casal, in so solemn a tone that Juliette suddenly realized how far, without taking heed, she had travelled sideways on the slippery slide of familiarity. It was altogether too late to draw back; so she made a virtue of necessity.

"Oh! for a year? That would be asking you too much. Suppose you begin with three months."

"You have my word of honor!" cried Raymond, in a meaning tone. "April, May, June—from now to the middle of July I will not touch a pack of cards!"

"'We shall see what we shall see,'" said Juliette, lightly. Then, so that this promise, formulated with all ceremony, should not constitute the link between them of a secret, she added:

"This will give ever so much pleasure to a certain lady I breakfast with to-morrow. You cannot guess who it is? I mean the Countess Gabrielle. I will carry the oath to her warm from the oven."

Madame de Tillière had no sooner pronounced these words than she comprehended their danger, and after the young man had taken his departure it was clear to her that she had been exceedingly unwise.

Would he not take this phrase as an implied rendezvous, and what would he think of such a line of conduct? She had an idea of writing to Gabrielle, as a precaution, to put off the breakfast to another day. But she could hardly do so. The morrow was the anniversary of the day when, as girls, she and Madame de Candolle had first met; they had adopted the pretty habit of breakfasting with each other alternately every year as the day came round, and of exchanging graceful presents. They loved these occasions of haunting the magazines in search of charming novelties. They experienced a childish delight in the handling of a thousand *bagatelles*, natty as their own well-gloved hands, of luxury and of La Mode.

"Suppose," said Juliette to herself, "I ask Gabrielle to come here and breakfast with me. If he has any idea of

getting himself invited to the Rue Tilsitt, he would think I am afraid of him. . . . But it won't come into his head."

Such and like thoughts preoccupied her mind so much that she ceased to give Henry de Poyanne a passing thought, until the hour came round once more to write him the *compte rendu* of the day. This time, without hesitation, she resolved to drop the name of Raymond Casal out of her communication. Already she accepted the compromise, or rather the dualism of conscience, represented by a secret guarded from her lover. Not without a hidden remorse that made this letter no easier to indite than the missive of the preceding night, in spite of the sophistries with which she tried to soothe her nerves.

"Heavens!" she cried, as she finished, "if this little piece of harmless secrecy gives me such pain, I wonder how the women feel who deceive their husbands!"

Juliette tried to persuade herself that it was not her wish to see Casal again so soon. In reality, when she arrived at the Rue Tilsitt, loaded with pretty presents for her bosom friend, if Juliette had not encountered Raymond she would have felt extremely disappointed. But she had reckoned too well the effects of her imprudent exclamation.

The very first action of Raymond Casal, after quitting the Rue Matignon, was to direct his coachman to make a bee-line for the De Candolle mansion. He found the Countess examining a pile of rings and bracelets in their multi-colored satin cases, the latest things in jewellery perpetrated by the joint brains of Old Bond Street and the Rue de la Paix.

"*À la bonne heure!*" exclaimed the Countess. "You

are just in time to tell me which you like best of these," pointing to two jewelled bangles, one with the word "REMEMBER" on it, in blue enamel, the other decorated with a tiny diamond-surrounded watch not so big as a half napoleon.

"*Mais celui-ci*," said Casal, pointing to the watch trinket, then a novelty, "because of its double advantage. In the first place, it is a modest decoration; then it is so convenient for taking leave. You see"—he laughed his old gay laugh—"a lady tires of her lover. She dares not consult the mantel clock to see if she may decently cut short the interview. All she has to do is to put her arm round her sweetheart's neck, and crane her pretty head like this" (imitating) "so as to read the time o' day on her wrist."

"The idea! It is just like you!" exclaimed Gabrielle. "You deserve to have your impudence repeated to the person the bracelet is meant for; and so it shall be, to punish you, not later than to-morrow morning."

"If you mean Madame de Tillière," hazarded Casal.

"See, if the clever fellow hasn't guessed it the first time! Well, if it *is* Madame de Tillière?"

"Then be good," said Casal. "Repeat my impertinence if you choose, but let me be on hand to counteract the plot."

"Are you at liberty to-morrow morning? Then come to breakfast; but try and have the courage of my good opinion of you, for it is simply spoiling you with kindness to ask you on such a day."

Then Gabrielle made him sit down, and told him the history of the friendship between her and Juliette, to which Casal listened religiously. So well did he play his

part that, when the morrow came, the first person Juliette set eyes on in Gabrielle's little *salon* was Raymond. Yes! She would have been disappointed if he had not made an effort to see her thus again; nor was she hypocritical enough to carry with her the long face with which she had received him on his first visit to the Rue Matignon. Successively, and in the best of faith, Juliette found herself nursing a growing interest in Casal and his affairs, and again reminding herself of her love-duty to Henry de Poyanne; so that now, side by side in her mind with each other, these two complex currents of feeling flowed on toward two different men.

If Casal was ingenuous enough to take seriously the mute reproach of Juliette's coolness to him this morning as a punishment for his pertinacity, all that Gabrielle saw in her friend's behavior was a little comedy she was playing for the benefit of her conscience. Gabrielle was brimming with electric gayety as she took Raymond's arm to go in to breakfast, while Juliette was left to De Candolle. It must be admitted that this little merry-making was one to which the ladies came prepared with a far better appetite than to dinners of ceremony. With the power of double-mindedness the novelists of to-day think they are the first to discover, Gabrielle, at once actress and audience, was saying to herself pleasantly:

"My little Juliette is obstinate in her severity. She wishes us to think she is vexed that Raymond is one of us this morning. But, madame, to carry the play on your shoulders, you should get rid of the air of distraction your eyes betray, which shows me that while you are trying to listen to Louis' attempt at fine talk, your whole attention is for 'our Casal.'

"Suppose Juliette was to be really smitten with Raymond, and this marriage was to turn out a reality!

"What a bugbear for a husband the Count would make! And thus I get rid of him. As for Raymond, his tastes are those of Louis, of our set, our world — and we should all be happy together.

"As for Casal, he is wrapped up in her.

"Good! she is beginning to unbend. He has said something witty, and how his glances hinge upon her more and more! He speaks to her. She answers. The tigress is a tame one, after all."

This little mute chorus was the accompaniment of a play of social converse that, regular in its irregularity, jumped from the Auteuil races to the sittings of the Corps Législatif; from the latest play to the latest "wrinkle" in high cookery; and then, of course, the latest scandal; till, at some given cue, De Candolle said to Raymond:

"I like your style of action last night, Casal. It is the first time I ever knew you to refuse to take the bank; and against Machault, who always wins."

"I am growing old," answered Raymond, shrugging his shoulders; "getting sick and tired of cards."

"It is at least not an unreasonable caprice," said Gabrielle. "When does it date from, and how long will it continue?"

"It is not a caprice, madame, I assure you," replied the young man, with the same sincerity he had given his word of honor with, the day before. This phrase, significant to Juliette only, sent a thrill through her every nerve. If Casal in so many words had said he loved her, she would not have experienced a more forcible emotion. She turned away her eyes for a minute, in order to mask

the mingled sentiments that made them sparkle so, first amongst which was glad surprise. Taking the words for all they were worth, it was Juliette's wisest cue to enfold herself thence onward in impenetrability. But from that moment to do so was beyond her strength. Giving this proof of his immediate reformation in virtue of the sister's counsel received from Juliette, was not Casal flattering her, only too skilfully, for the good judgment she had displayed in lending him her ear so readily?

Above all, Raymond continued to please her infinitely well, thanks to the personal magnetism which disconcerts analysis, and seems almost to justify the harsh opinion of certain modern philosophers who think that most love comes within the laws of physical attraction. It was long after they had returned from the grand billiard room, where all four, in the modern fashion, had taken a hand in a game of English pool, before Juliette looked at the little watch, already at her wrist, that Gabrielle had given her with sweetest kisses, to see with astonishment how the hour-hand had galloped.

"Three o'clock," she cried, "already, and I ordered the carriage at two! *Allons—je me sauve!*"

"Will you wait for me?" said Gabrielle. "I will go with you."

"Ah!" answered Juliette, putting on her bonnet at the looking-glass, "how happy I should be if I had not promised to drive round for Cousin de Nançay."

Juliette was astonished herself, as she went down the broad staircase, at this new untruth minted on the spur of the moment. Why, if not that she felt herself just then unable to bear the certain teasing of her friend? The hidden burrs of conscience were hurting her too much.

According to custom, her footman, before quitting the Rue Matignon, had put in the carriage all letters that had come by the midday mail. Amongst three was one from De Poyanne. It was a long time before Juliette could summon courage to open it. She began to tell herself in real earnest that she was treating this absent lover of hers detestably. Through the spectacles of her remorse she saw him in exile at Besançon, seated at table, writing to her after the terrible fatigues of the political day, in order to refresh his spirit at the fountain of her memory. All at once all those chords of tender admiration that had formerly riveted her mind upon the noble orator and statesman were sounded by the viewless touch of conscience. Her fingers trembled as she tore away the envelope. Perhaps at that instant, if she had encountered in the course of the letter a single phrase of love triumphant, it might have given her the force of mind and rectitude of soul to cast the shattered image of Casal to the four winds.

But this new letter seemed gay in tone and almost careless to her jaundiced eye. In this the Count had thought to please Juliette, but he had reckoned without his Casal. Not a word in the epistle vibrated sufficiently to reach the inner ear of his sweetheart.

Alas for the misunderstandings of lovers' separations! The woful, the irreparable wrongs the stupid sheets commit, which we have not had the tact to impregnate with love, the courage to enregister with tears. To write to the woman we love, after being many days absent, is, as it were, to talk to her behind a mask, through which we can see neither the expression of her face nor the encouragement of her eyes; it is to emit a flow of empty

words, whose echo from the idolized one does not reach us—words that may, perhaps, result in losing her forever.

Juliette read the letter over twice, and each time cried: "How he is changed!"

It was not true; and it was doubly dangerous for her to think so at the moment, cosseted and cabined as she was by the cobweb netting of a most cunning courtship.

. . . . . .

To be quite fair to this charming and generally prudent woman, we must allow that Raymond Casal had the tact, in the weeks following these encounters, before Poyanne's return, to conduct himself with impeccable modesty. He knew precisely the present isolation of Madame de Tillière's life. Nothing could exceed his delicacy. Nor was this finesse entirely, or even chiefly, the result of cold calculation. He was but giving his sincere emotions fair play. For Juliette, this was the very danger: Casal conducted himself toward her, under the impulse of his newly roused sensibilities, as though he had in fact been a diplomatist in love.

In spite of a life sufficiently debasing, Raymond was naturally of a fine enough instinct, so much of an artist in sensations, to give in to all the charm of this Platonic commerce with Madame de Tillière—entirely free, in this case, from the throes of self-love that distract so many lovers in the very presence of their idol.

When a professional *viveur* becomes really amorous of a really good woman, his youth in part comes back to him again—an intoxicating form of rejuvenescence that lends him once again the hope and faith of early manhood. Needless to say how flattering to the lady this

strange phenomenon appears! According to the admirable formula of the mediæval philosopher, it shows how love grafts a new animal on the old animal of habit; so much so that to be in love is to become another being for the time, to behave in diametrical opposition to one's former ideals, to act as if the past were obsolete.

Like all conversions, durable or short-lived, the reason of this juvenescence lies in the common laws of intellect. Every one of us has the imagination of his way of life. That is a necessary corollary to our daily habits, a law severe but just. If Juliette had been an ordinary woman, Casal would have taken her measure accordingly, for in judgment of the sex he was incomparably acute. That he elevated her on an alabaster pedestal of thought far above any woman he had ever met was at once a subtile flattery to Gabrielle, and a tribute to the widow which she could not choose but graciously acknowledge.

Soon he found means to see her every day, and sometimes twice, or even more, a day. They met at the Rue Matignon, at the De Candolles', at the theatre, at picture-galleries, in the Bois. It was more especially in the little boudoir, with the quaint old hangings and effective pictures of the widow's ancestors, that Casal best and most felt this passion of love and respect that Juliette had roused since he first made her acquaintance.

Since the third visit and all those that followed, with the gracious trickery of womankind, Juliette had got into the way, with a simple smile or an innocent phrase, of reminding Raymond of the platform on which they met; so that at no time was he able to grow in familiarity, but had rather, on each visit, to make his footing good by some new trait of gentleness. Thus half their conversa-

tions at the house were taken up by Casal reconquering the ground that had otherwise been lost.

On the rare occasions when Juliette abandoned herself to the passing charm of his society, she was careful to lower her eyes lest the fulness of her appreciation should be realized by Casal. She took to herself that best of shields against a man indeed in love, the attitude that nothing he could possibly say would affect her serenity.

"And is this I?" Casal would think as he walked home, and bared his forehead to the passing breeze; "the man who mocked his comrades every time they 'fell in love,' who deemed the fall insane, absurd?

"But one must admit that there is no one like her!"

Then, because he was a man of wit, in spite of his emotion: "It is the way they all talk, every one of them."

Then, after a very *rataplan* of doubt: "No! she is but little lower than the angels; and as for *me*, I think I know myself. If this is love, I will be hospitable."

Casal's favorite amusement, that of lovers since the beginning of the world, was to catalogue innumerable reasons why Juliette was so superior to her sex in general. A thing that heightened the intoxication of this romance was the fact that he was leading a double life. For he still frequented his club, the race-course, and the theatre, and did not seek to avoid any of his old friends. It thus seemed to him he had a multiplied personality, and to savor the sweet reflections of a lover in the hurtling of the vulgar rounded his life with placid poetry.

. . . . . .

Already a month had passed since the meeting at the Opera and Casal's timid request to pay a second visit to

the Rue Matignon. It was ten o'clock in the morning. Raymond was in his dressing saloon in the Rue Lisbonne. On a marble table, by the side of his celebrated cabinet of boots and shoes, stood an open casket circled by a collarette of gleaming pearls. It was his parting present to Christine Anroux, the token of a long farewell. The thought of the actress had become insupportable to him.

In a rocking-chair was seated Lord Herbert Bohun, ready dressed for a ride in the Bois with his old friend, flicking the carpet with his whip. Lord Bohun very seldom opened his mouth, as a rule, before lunch. On this occasion he condescended, telegraphically : "Capital dinner, last night, Machault's. Wouldn't have taken twenty pounds for the thirst I had on me. Château Margaux, white, good—'69 Latour, better—grand old port, best of all. After that, Phillips's. Finished the night on his abominable whiskey and worse water. Where the deuce were *you?*"

As this terrible alcoholic maniac—remarkable for having said one day in Sicily when there was a severe earthquake : "I didn't think I was as drunk as *that!*"—was dilating on his night out, Raymond was sitting, mechanically adjusting his "four-in-hand," lost in thought. He saw himself—at the very hour when Herbert Bohun was "sobering up" on "bad whiskey and worse water"—in the boudoir of the Rue Tilsitt, talking to Gabrielle and Juliette. What about? He only remembers Juliette's robe—the same rose satin, festooned with black lace, she wore the first night, the wonderful night of the dinner-party.

What reminiscences live in dress!

And when Herbert insisted :

"Six nights you've disappointed me. Some new flame, eh, Lothario?"

"On my word, no," said Casal. "I went to bed at eleven; I was knocked up."

"It's a big success," said the other. "Fresh color, bright eyes, good condition. No doubt *she* appreciates. Are you ready?"

The fact is, for years Casal had not looked such a *joli garçon* as at that moment, never had the flame of physical life burned more intently in him. Women of society, who had known Casal in days gone by, said to each other as they passed him on horseback:

"He is a marvel, yon Casal. Always five and twenty."

There was another reason for Raymond's gayety, in addition to his perfect sense of health. The evening before he had caught an allusion made by Juliette to a projected shopping excursion in the Rue de la Paix, and he intended to watch for the well-known coupé. Taking joy in such schoolboy antics is a sure sign of love in anybody over thirty-five—above all, when a man has led the life that Raymond had.

Behold Casal prowling about, between the Place Vendôme and the Avenue de l'Opera, like a countryman, looking into each shop-window. His heart beats fast as he recognizes Juliette through one. Entering, he has a student's blush upon his face as he salutes her. But, as she does not seem annoyed, he hands her to her carriage, childishly happy, and so remains all afternoon. Presently, as he fences in the club, Place Vendôme, everybody will admire his play, while the habitués interlard their talk with strange arguments on the Italian method *vs.* French. All the while the fencer's thoughts are of a

fair woman bowing adieu from her carriage window! Later on, as he visits Madame d'Arcole, on the off-chance that Juliette may do the same, his thoughts still point to certain lovely eyes, so softly tender that they madden him, so sternly reserved they make him tremble every time he thinks to tell his love.

"All the same, I am somewhat silly," thought Casal. "Of two things, one: either she is a phenomenal flirt, or else she loves me. In either case I must take action. Every night, I say so; every morning, I am once more slave to her sweet looks. I hardly know myself.

"Never have I met any one who is in the least like her. . . . When she is near me, I feel myself so little —little. And she? . . . If I displeased her, do you think she would receive me, as she does, two or three times a week? She knew I should be at the Duchess's this evening. They invited her before my face. . . . Why was she not there?

"To-day she had a sad look in her eyes. There was something on her mind. But I have hunted up her life. Nothing, not a shadow, to obscure her history. Why does she thus, all the time, seem to be reining herself in as if she struggled fiercely with her thoughts? . . . It is all very simple, I think. She loves: she wishes not to love. . . . I certainly will speak to-morrow."

Casal sleeps well on this appeasing certainty. His vast experience of women enabled him with a near aim to divine the truth as to Juliette's feelings, but not the whole truth. That she hardly knew herself.

But he was wrong, entirely wrong, when he concluded that religious scruples, the wish to retain her worldly independence, regard for reputation, or the faithfully kept

souvenir of a lost husband—that any of such things produced this vacillation of the heart in Juliette; by turns abandoning herself to sweetest thoughts, by turns a monster of propriety.

Unceasingly conscience tormented Madame de Tillière, thus tripping down the flowery slope of sentimental dalliance far in advance of her discretion, till the revolving weeks brought round the near return of De Poyanne. Now it was a fortnight off, and now ten days, a week—a whole, whole week; . . . five days, and then he would be home, and Juliette would have to explain how it came about that she had taken to herself a new intimate—and what a man for intimate!—without saying a word about him in her letters. And so at last, in the very mid-puzzle of so many uncertainties and procrastinations, so much innocent, or blameworthy, weakness, now two days of freedom only remain; now one—and now but several hours.

And oh! but they are hard to go through, these last hours, in which the waiting on what she fears mingles so bitterly with remorse for what she had permitted. It would have been so trivial, everything, had she but spoken. . . . To-morrow Henry will enter the little *salon* where Raymond sat so long yesterday. What shall she say to him? . . . Why, when she had foreseen this crisis in the future from the very first evening, had she allowed things to come to such a pass of her own free will? If she had to tell the absent one the truth, in what words would she transcribe the sentiment by means of which she justified actions—and secret actions—which, she knew, would seem so graceless to Poyanne?

Was she herself acquainted with these sentiments?

Did she now *dare* to look into her soul with her usual sincerity? No. . . . She was too much afraid to discover something that all the while she *knew* she was hiding from herself.

If she continued silent, could she hope that Henry *never* might discover that she had received Casal as a friend—if not in such intimacy as Mirant, D'Avançon, and a few more, still as a friend?

"As a lover?"

She repeats these three words, wondering by what secret influence impelled she has allowed day to succeed day, one drawing another in its wake, till she has been tossed into this whirlpool of conflicting sentiments.

Then she falls to congratulating herself that in all these six weeks Raymond Casal has not pronounced one solitary word that Henry might not have heard, establishing in her mind the fact that her relations to the young man can be reduced to innocent visits, official meetings at the theatre or Madame de Candolle's; affirming that never once has she o'erstepped the rights of woman, fixing her mind upon the point that it was only a kindly action on her part to countenance a man the world misjudged; but all these conscientious paradoxes vanish in front of the stern need for a very simple explanation.

Why is the interval so painful to poor Juliette that she passes all the afternoon preceding Henry's return prone on her couch, a prey to moral agony—the return of the man to whom she has vowed herself forever? Hardly a ray of light enters through the closed venetians. There she lies, with her eyes open, her temples throbbing. What does she see through the dilated pupils?

A knock at the outer door, distant, but distinctly heard

in the unnatural calm of the dark room. How she trembles!

It is Gabrielle, who, having heard through Madame de Nançay of the Count's return and Juliette's headache, has hastened to the latter's side.

The friend is seated by the couch. She takes in her own cool ones the burning hands, and with that instinct of curiosity that mingles with pity in the kindest confidantes, exclaims:

"So Poyanne returns to-morrow!"

"Yes," said Juliette in an almost inaudible voice.

"But," said Gabrielle, drawing nearer, "will he not be a little jealous of our friend?"

"Ah! do not speak," cried Juliette, distractedly grasping the hand she held in both her own; "do not make me think of him!"

"*Allons!*" insisted the Countess, "this is what is killing you, these childish scruples you make so much too much of! Why, you are free to receive anybody you like, I suppose? And will you let me tell you as a sister why this Raymond pleases you so much? And will you let me name another thing you know?"

"No, no; be still!" implored Juliette, drawing back and regarding her friend, horror-struck. "I will not listen!"

"But," said Gabrielle, deciding on putting an end to this to her inexplicable mystery at one stroke, "why should you refuse to marry him?"

"To marry him?" echoed Juliette, in agony. "It is impossible, impossible!"

"Why?"

"Because I am not free," sighed the unhappy Juliette,

falling back on the pillow; and in a voice choked with sobs her overburdened heart relieves itself in an avowal to which Gabrielle listens, weeping too. The faithful "saint" does not think, as ninety-nine women out of a hundred would, "*I might have known it.*"

She only understands the terrible game she has been playing when she threw Casal in Juliette's way. Gabrielle is terrified at her handiwork, for she distinctly sees that Juliette dares not even now read aloud her heart, the not obscure prologue of a profound passion for Raymond, at the very moment that she first hears of Juliette's most solemn engagement to De Poyanne.

"Ah! poor girl, poor girl!" she cried, covering her lips, her hair, her hands with kisses.

And then, in anguish:

"But what is to be done?"

Madame de Tillière convulsively embraced this lifelong friend, so kind and gentle with her now in her supreme despair, and hopelessly moaned:

"As if I know!"

VII.

GHOSTS OF LOVE.

"Sweet as remembered kisses after death."
—*Tennyson.*

THERE are certain parts of our character so peculiarly our own that the master-passion of love, which transforms so many other elements of our humanity, passes over them without interference. Juliette de Tillière, carried off her feet in spite of her better judgment by the transports of a new regard during these weeks of increasing intimacy with Raymond, continued, in all that had no relation with this growing sentiment, the same discreet and prudent woman as of yore—the same Madame de Tillière, whose detractors called too prudent and discreet, whose friends adored for delicate reserve.

Juliette so arranged, from day to day, during this month and a half, that neither her mother nor her familiars should come across Casal too often. But there was one of her friends not so easy to deceive—D'Avançon, who, since the first visit of the young man to the Rue Matignon, had instinctively distrusted every tactic of Casal. His sallies of that first day, his denunciation, a day or two after, of Raymond's gambling propensities, his little diplomatic strokes of warning, all had been received by

Juliette with a bearing so unlike her ordinary docility as to raise suspicion newly in his mind. Soon his eyes had opened to the mortifying conviction that a genuine friendship was gradually forming between these two, thanks to the protection of the Countess Gabrielle. It sufficed for D'Avançon to pay an unexpected visit to the Rue Matignon, only to find Casal there before him; to frequent the Opera, only to see Casal conversing with the widow, to fan his distrust into a flame of jealousy as passionate as it was misplaced. By showing her irritation with his intermeddling, Madame de Tillière but increased his enmity, until one day he recommenced his diatribes against the young men of the period, when Juliette took him up in such a fashion as to make him glad to drop the subject.

But if, ostensibly, it ceased to occupy his mind, it was the more a matter for reflection with him when alone. If he was assiduous in his attendance at the whist tables of the Imperial and the Petit Cercle, it was because he would not lose a syllable of tattle about society or the *coulisses*, in order that he might visit the Rue Matignon charged with all the news, and ready to justify his easy access by a modified scandal-mongery which amused the widow as the echo of distant Paris.

Nothing was more odious to D'Avançon than to behold one of these heroes of polite life established on a firm footing in the very Louis XVI. boudoir that had so long been camping-ground for him, especially Raymond Casal, against whom for years he had cherished the animosity of a leader of the by-gone generation against a chieftain of the present. To tell the truth, it was extremely galling to be thus ousted from his priority, after the years he had been

used to pose as the grand seigneur of the Rue Matignon paradise. The attitude we ourselves take up toward the world so strangely dominates our vanity!

The important net result of these diverse influences was that, on the eve of Poyanne's return, the diplomatist had already fought three pitched battles—in the dark—against Casal, not only with Madame de Tillière herself, in which he had been ignominiously routed with the loss of much pride and more *prestige*, but with her friends. He had begun with Madame de Nançay, whose society he frequented regularly, and had painted for her a portrait of Casal so forbidding that he missed his footing through excess of zeal, forgetting Talleyrand's great maxim—in soberer moments D'Avançon's idol—that exaggeration is but topsy-turvy insignificance.

"*Soyez tranquille!*" exclaimed Madame de Nançay to the grizzled diplomatist; "if he is such a terrible man as you say, he will not often come to see my Juliette."

And when, with indulgent irony, the mother told her daughter of the quaint anxieties of their common friend, Madame de Tillière laughed heartily. Thus it was, between a jest at such strange jealousy, and Casal's perfect behavior during one or two encounters, that the good old lady slept in peace and comfort with absolute confidence in her child—the better that Juliette, not without a twinge of remorse, had edged in the statement, as though by an afterthought:

"Monsieur Casal is one of Gabrielle de Candolle's most intimate friends."

. . . . . .

D'Avançon, defeated on two sides, as a second conversation with Madame de Nançay convinced him, was

obliged to rely on such of the *habitués* of the Rue Matignon as chanced to be in Paris—Mirant and Accragne. He knew how highly Madame de Tillière thought of both. If these two gentlemen, without apparent combination, should come and report to the widow how much already public opinion occupied itself with the assiduities toward her of such a notorious evil-liver as Casal, without question Juliette would compel the young man to minimize the number of his visits. There was a certain indelicacy in setting these friends to play his own cross-purposes, for both might very easily be still ignorant of Casal's visits to the Rue Matignon. But the unfortunate diplomatist was too far gone in egotism and envy to notice such a petty circumstance. Received yet more coolly by Juliette since his treacherous attempt upon her mother's sympathy, D'Avançon suffered tortures with the complication ; and if he did not go so far as to suspect Madame de Tillière of being in love with Raymond, he was not mistaken in anticipating danger in an intimacy which, even at first sight, had seemed to him so shocking. It was thus, in all good faith to serve his dear friend's best and highest interests, that he presented himself one fine afternoon at Mirant's studio, in order to warn him of what was going on.

The artist lived in the Rue Viète, next door to the regretted Nittis, and his *atélier* had long been a half-way house for amateurs and authors of the day. Mirant had obtained world-wide celebrity for his enchanting flower-pieces. He was a tall and burly man, with the shoulders of Antinöus, and the touch, on canvas, of a butterfly. As D'Avançon entered, he was engaged in putting the final niceties of tint upon a mimic nosegay of pinks—snow-

white, rose-colored, saffron, crimson—gorgeously dressed in the velvet jacket painters most affect, and slowly blinking his prominent, soft brown eyes in order to obtain a more discriminating view of his success.

He made the diplomatist a courtly bow, continuing to paint and talking at the same time; which makes one think there must be something mechanical in the painter's art to enable him to do two things at once. Perhaps that is the reason artists are such a happy race of men, if their work thus allows them surplus energy; whereas the unfortunate author, more and more dull of movement in proportion to the concentration of his thoughts, becomes a sadder and a sadder mortal with the accumulation of his works.

D'Avançon was too much a man of the world, in the worst sense of the term, not to despise this sort of man a little; and it was but seldom that he paid him a visit. He reckoned that the rarity of his appearance in the Rue Viète would lend a certain importance to his recital of the new friendship between Madame de Tillière and Casal. Thus to judge was to fail to allow for the extreme sensibility hidden in the brains of most successful artists so long as their vanity is not at play. All the while dotting on the finishing pigments of his favorite flowers, Mirant was asking himself what new interest could have transported the diplomatist to his studio. He understood something of what was on the carpet as soon as he caught the tone of voice in which D'Avançon asked:

"Are you the man to do Madame de Tillière a real and lasting service?"

And then the visitor commenced his recitation, composed for the occasion. In proportion to the length of

his discourse he could see the painter's clear eyes darken with disquietude. The very idea of him taking the liberty of lecturing Madame de Tillière made his hand unsteady, and he laid down palette and brushes to look D'Avançon in the face, and say:

"Why do you not tell her all this yourself?"

"Because I and Casal are not the best of friends, and coming from me, the advice would thus be shorn of its voucher—authenticity."

"But, on the other hand, unluckily, Casal and myself *are* the very best of friends, and I must tell you that I think you are mistaken in him."

Enchanted with this loop-hole of escape, the painter took up his tools and set to work, launching, in the meanwhile, a eulogy of Raymond Casal at his interlocutor, to which D'Avançon, in his turn, was forced to lend his ear. "He has—you do not know it?—ample intellect. Suppose he *does* amuse himself a little: wherein lies the harm? *Tenez*, I judge men of the world by a little detail; I, that am only a plain, straightforward painter. When I hear one of these drawing-room connoisseurs talking pictures, I know how to have him. I say to myself: 'My boy, you are cutting and slashing away at a great rate, but you don't know what you are talking about, Monsieur Monkey.' You, D'Avançon, you are a man of judgment; you have not come here to teach me my business. You have seen me painting away for half an hour and have not hazarded a particle of advice. That is real tact, my friend. Casal is full, chockful of tact, and taste, as well."

. . . . . .

"The conceit of these artists!" grumbled D'Avançon, as, a quarter of an hour later, he descended the Rue Villiers.

"This man is really a very clever fellow, and he loves Juliette with all the soul he has. But Casal has served his turn with a neat compliment or two, and blinded him. Now for Accragne; he is a tough old bird, not so easily snared with sweet words."

Ascending the innumerable stairs that led to Accragne's apartments, the diplomatist ruminated how best to broach the subject without receiving one of those gruff replies that Ludovic Accragne was in the habit of treating him to, on account of his superannuated fopperies.

"Bah!" he said to himself, "I will employ the process that succeeded so well in Florence in '66, with Rogister."

This celebrated exploit of the old diplomatist, on which he would continue to pride himself till his death, consisted simply in flattering the mania of Baron Otto von Rogister, an accomplished numismatist but a very middling minister. D'Avançon had got into his best graces by praising his collection of coins, and then presenting the Baron with a Queen Anne farthing which he happened to have inherited from his grandfather. This friendship between the Prussian envoy and the French emissary had resulted in one of those bootless triumphs that make the paper glory of embassadors, the premature cognition of an important piece of news; a bit of knowledge, nevertheless, that had not the slightest effect on matters of state in progress.

Ever since then D'Avançon had deemed himself Rothan and Saint-Vallier rolled into one; and we have seen how readily this silly sufficiency in his powers of intrigue got him into awkward places. His intellect and good nature both were tarnished by this antiquated success. Who knows what spite an isolated success may wreak

upon our destiny? If D'Avançon had not deemed himself a diplomatist of the first water, he would never have conceived the eccentric project of linking Juliette's intimates against Casal, and he would never have been overwhelmed with the humiliation of a quadruple checkmate at the hands of Juliette herself, of Madame de Nançay, Mirant, and Ludovic Accragne.

He sailed boldly, however, into the presence of the great man of benevolence, whom he expected to so easily gain over, and began by questioning him at length on his charitable undertakings. The ex-prefect beamed with delight. He deployed to please his interiocutor whole budgets of town and country projects, turning over, in the demonstration, endless piles of blue-books, and statistics culled from huge volumes of letters labelled with their dates and ranged around the bureaucratic-looking room. Accragne was but a plain old man, but his fine smile lit up a brow that had no further thought on earth except to serve humanity.

"And now," said D'Avançon, without having hit on a way of inserting a preliminary wedge, "let me have a word with you about a genuine service we may do Madame Juliette de Tilhère."

"What service?" asked Accragne eagerly, the smile broadening on his lips at mention of the name of Raymond Casal. "I know what you want to tell me!" he cried, interrupting the unhappy diplomat. "Our ever dear madame has interested herself in our grand work. Already she has subscribed for ten new beds in our proposed infirmary. . . . What would you have? A woman is abundantly excusable for flirting, just enough to raise money for the poor. . . . You, 'clerical' as you are,

cannot be angry at such a thing. Did not the Church" —Accragne was a Voltairean—"did not the Church invent its Purgatory in order to assist the dissemination of the True Faith?"

. . . . . .

"Accragne only needs to be tickled with a subscription and a quotation from the Philosophical Dictionary to go through fire and water for a man," thought D'Avançon, bitterly, on his way out. "It is a good thing De Jardes is out of town, or I should have to mop up some twaddle or other about Raymond Casal having talked to him the other night at the theatre with the utmost intelligence about the great question of rifled cannon *versus* armor-plate, the construction of a new fortress at Brest, or the right conduct of military balloons. This Casal is the very devil. . . .

"But patience! Poyanne will be back to-morrow; and if I love not the man's doctrines, at least he is a gentleman of sense."

Juliette's drama of the heart, which had been rehearsing for so many weeks, was now to receive a new complication at the hands of a man who, with inexcusable awkwardness, deemed himself the best protector of her happiness. But how was D'Avançon to know that his cunning approach to Poyanne would constitute a cruel danger to Juliette, and ring up the curtain, for the orator himself, on the acutest suffering of an unhappy life?

Such is the price we pay for the forbidden apples of joy. Our faults are punished by their own fruition. In what we call the natural sequence of events there is a spirit of justice ever at work, which, while giving freedom

to our predilections, chastises us by means of stupid wishes realized.

To Madame de Nançay the diplomatist said: "One day people will begin to talk about these visits of Casal's;" to Mirant: "I fear that people will begin to talk about the impropriety;" to Ludovic Accragne: "I think people are beginning to talk;" to Poyanne he had better say: "I know that all the world *is* talking of these things."

And so virulent was this man's hatred of Raymond Casal that he determined not to give Juliette an opportunity of being beforehand with him. Poyanne was to arrive in Paris at five o'clock in the morning. At ten A.M. D'Avançon was with him, so carefully had he studied the Count's movements, and was concluding his philippic thus:

"It is only you, my friend, who can prevent this poor lady from doing her reputation such an injury. . . . I should have liked to speak to her myself. . . . But as you very well know, madame is always glad to tease me for my antipathy to young men—as if I had this feeling for such men as *you*, my dear Poyanne!

"It is true that I am horrified by the *viveurs* of the day. Not that I blame young men for amusing themselves. As for my friends and I, as we said when poor Napoleon fell, '*Nous nous sommes diablement amusés pour diz huit années!*' But then, you know, in *those* days amusement was one of the Fine Arts. We never used to sit at table till we were gorged, or roll underneath it over-full of brandy and soda. Such manners may be good enough for Englishmen. Everything from London to-day—from neckties to new vices."

The Old Beau might have gone on indefinitely pitching into the Anglomania of the Young Man of the Period. Henry de Poyanne's attention was far away. Hardly, on the other insisting, "You will speak to Madame de Tillière?" could he elicit: "I will try and find an opportunity." The Count had just received in the heart one of those accidental stabs that the hands of busybodies so often deal; and all we can do is to bleed inwardly in solitude. When D'Avançon had taken his leave, proud of his diplomacy as a whole congress, little did he imagine that he was leaving behind him a fellow-creature in despair. The calumniator would not have been in such a hurry to recross the Seine, then the Champs Elysées, to reach his home, if he had realized his handiwork. On his way he noticed Casal caracoling along on the slow but handsome Boscard. The young man was laughing and talking with Lord Bohun.

"Amuse yourself, my young friend, amuse yourself, while you may!" thought the conspirator, following him with his sunken eyes; "that will not prevent us from cutting out some very pretty work for you. . . . Poyanne will open fire. Juliette will never guess I have seen him already. I know her. She is prudent. She was surely born to be the wife of a diplomatist. Her very first idea, as soon as she realizes that people are beginning to talk about her, will be to so arrange that Casal shall call less frequently. The animal begins to grunt, insists, commits some gross mal-strategy, and so we are well quit of him. . . . If this method fails, we will choose another. I had three strings to my bow with Monsieur le Baron Rogister, but, ha! ha! ha! the Queen Anne farthing did the business, *Dieu merci!* What pleases *me* is that I was

not deceived in Poyanne. I felt, I knew, he was the man to see things in a proper and becoming light."

. . . . . .

Whilst the unconscious executioner was indulging in this little soliloquy, his unhappy victim, Poyanne, was walking his chamber, a prey to the most hopeless, helpless grief. The room was large, and the bright sunshine lit up the gold letterings on hundreds of books ranged round two sides of it. As the orator paced its length, how many times, he thought, in the last few months had it come upon him in this very room that perhaps Juliette no longer cared for him as she was wont. But what child's play were these chimerical doubts compared with the atrocious certainty that confronted him this day!

A certainty how arrived at? For the revelation of the ex-diplomatist amounted to no more than this: on certain occasions Madame de Tillière received a new friend whilst he was away without making any mention of it in her letters.

Nothing more nor less than that.

All through their correspondence he had felt that here, too, a bitter change was in process; that this sweet spirit, on whom he had placed his every hope of earthly happiness, was failing him. Her letters, it is true, arrived punctually. Always the same supple and lady-like handwriting, whose mere sight sufficed to bring the tears to his eyes. It was every day the same diary, of a woman's life at once isolated and sociable, critical and affectionate. What, then, was wanting? Why, instead of finding in these letters the elasticity of former days, did the Count recognize in every line, reproaching only himself, traces of effort, as if the labor was a thing of duty? Nor

did he dare to complain of this in his replies; and, as we have seen, he wrote Juliette good-humored pages, the letters of a man of action who smiles at his task, only to remain, as soon as the envelope was sealed, seated with his hand to his forehead for half an hour at a time, looking into his heart, where he found the same inexplicable timidity that had prevented him from claiming on the eve of his departure the kiss of peace he went away without.

Similarly, in this hour of separation he strangled down the words that came demanding utterance; the echo of his plaints fell muffled back into his overburdened soul.

This unusually noble spirit, a stranger to the egotism that passes often in the garb of love, searched himself for some cause that might explain his altered relationship with Juliette. He accused himself of not loving her for her own sake; reproached himself with having been despotic and displeasing. He began to formulate projects of behavior toward her, so tender and all inclusive, that his sweet lady might become once more the friend of other days. His sadness vainly sought the mouthpiece of adoration; while, at that very moment, on receipt of his letter of the night before, the idolized Juliette was murmuring: "How he is changed!" and trying to justify the culpable silence that she still kept up from week to week.

Hardly had the cruel diplomatist turned the corner of the Rue Domenique when this very explanation he had been longing for appeared not only possible but compulsory. It now became a want more pressing than hunger, comparable only to the necessity of the living

for air. The revelation he had been vouchsafed defined the very doubts he had so long entertained of Juliette's love so clearly that he now awoke to action.

At first the unexpected recital had filled him with unreasoned images of horror. Instead of perceiving these two simple facts, the presence of Casal, the silence of Madame de Tillière, a vision, clear as photographic fact, showed him the pretty *salon* in the Rue Matignon, associated with the memory of a thousand happy, peaceful hours passed in Juliette's society: basking in this delicate and once delightful *aura*, he beheld that detestable guest, Raymond Casal, whom he had learned to judge so hardly on account of poor Pauline de Corcieux!

The collocation of the place and the man was like a twist of some infernal instrument of torture in a lonely dungeon, where his screams would only bring great clouts of mildew spattering down on his distorted features.

Then he beheld Juliette, seated at her desk, when all was quiet, communicating every detail of the day, except the name of Raymond Casal, to her deluded diary.

Suddenly the little scene before his departure to Besançon flashed across Poyanne's mind; and once more the phrases of the evening repeated themselves in his ears, once more the image of Juliette as she *turned her back on his caress!*

Just heavens! was it possible that even then her pursing lips concealed the word—*Casal!*

In the mid-battle of these imagined terrors, so poignant was the agony they implied, that with tears and sobs Count Henry de Poyanne, soldier, orator, politician, wit, threw himself on a divan, and wept his heart out like a whipped child.

"How could she have the heart?" he muttered, when a little calmer.

Then a fresh memory came in to freeze his soul—a memory the very refinement of horror. . . . "How could she have the heart?" Why, were not these the *ipsissima verba*, the identical and absolute words, he had spoken eleven years before with regard to his own wife, when he was first told of her treason?

The analogy of this crisis and that came so forcibly to the Count's mind that the excess of suffering provoked a reaction.

In the moral world there are certain blows we may receive, so sudden and so full of threat that they act as an alarm to self-preservation. A little danger sometimes paralyzes the will; a mortal one will rouse a very coward to protect his threatened life.

Neither will love die the death without a struggle.

Far too profoundly planted in Count Henry's heart was his adoration for Juliette de Tillière to be uprooted by a summer storm. His senses reeled at the suggestion of similarity between his infamous wife and this sweet woman, the object for so long, so long, of his whole soul's devotion. Poyanne raised himself, he passed his hands over his face, as though to shut out the sighted Gorgon, and cried in a savage voice:

"No, no; it is not true—not that, not that!" There are some thoughts so dreadful that the man of sentiment refuses to believe them till they, perhaps, are trebly proven. This last image was altogether too repulsive; to conjure it was to compel its disappearance. The Count's belief in Juliette's honor was unassailable—like her own mother's. Spite of his grief, his woe, he found his assur-

ance intact within his heart. There is a certain automaticity in our faculties, so that when an impetus is given to one part of them, the rest are set rotating in the same direction with proportionate velocity. This impetus, in the Count's case, was the suggestion, self-elicited, of an analogy between his wife and Juliette, and his mind was now at last in train to act.

"*Voyons*," said he, "let us argue this matter." And he began walking up and down again, constraining his reasoning powers to a lucid analysis of every circumstance connected with Juliette, in so far as he knew them, as though it had been merely a political discussion. "Let us argue this matter, and let me circumscribe the issue. Thus, for instance, Juliette has seen this man—has seen him often, very often. D'Avançon has given me to understand, daily. Does he not exaggerate? What is his evidence worth? He has a masterly intellect, but is the servant of his temper. So. This very temper constitutes my argument. . . . Since he came here this morning he must have dogged my arrival. He must have been tormented more than even he is wont to be. . . . Let us admit that fact, and look beyond it. Juliette has seen Casal since my departure, often—Casal, whom she could only have known a very little while, weeks at most—Juliette, who opens her door not readily to any one, and that when she knew my opinion of the man. There can only be two reasons for such conduct. Either he pleases her—and why might he not? He pleased Pauline too greatly—or else she felt dull, and received him for amusement. After this one, another, then somebody else. It is the beginning of the transformation of her life. Let us look clearly into these two reasons."

With such sentences, and many more of like form, Poyanne, now master of his feelings, had the courage to call the muster of the situation. His heart, however, bled; for whether Juliette had been playing a little comedy of the affections with Casal, or whether she had received him to merely help to pass away a heavy hour, it was almost equally a sign of profound dissatisfaction with himself. And Juliette must have known so well that she had deliberately concealed these visits. Fresh light dawned every moment, if light that could be called which but illuminated the horrors of the landscape.

"She has had pity on me—pity!" he thought, and this idea was vinegar upon his wounds. To ask the bread of love and get the stone of pity is not pleasant. Hate, perfidy, even abandonment—all these do not quite cast out hope; but pity! A woman who has aimed to kill you may perhaps fall into your arms after gashing you with a dagger, but the woman who is disenchanted with you and tired of your society; who tries, in fancied mercy, to cure you of your love for her by slow degrees, as she has probably been cured of hers for you; whose surviving kindness to you is summed up in that one little word, pity—in such a woman you need never expect to revive the sentiment of love, lest pity change into its congener, contempt.

"Anything rather than Juliette's pity," cried the Count, "even the breaking off of our engagement."

From that moment he hesitated not. By two o'clock he was in the Rue Matignon, his desire now to face the truth strong as his wish to face the Prussian was in '70. What would he learn? A shiver of horror seized his thought lest those beloved lips should lisp: "I love you now no longer."

Yet in some states of doubt, certainty, atrocious as it may turn out, seems preferable to that midnight of the heart in which one ignores all facts unfavorable to the idol it contains. Into this corner of the wilderness, like the hunted stag at bay, had D'Avançon conducted the hue and cry and chased the Count.

At the instant the door opened before Henry, Juliette was seated in one of the great easy-chairs, covered with last-century silk, that perhaps—who knows?—had witnessed the quarrel between the ancestress a hundred years ago, and cruel Alexander de Tilly. Although the sun of May shone gayly into the room, and the view was cheerful as of yore, with azure sky and all spring greenery, the fire had been lighted on the hearth. Juliette was robed in white. With her marble pallor, her eyes that spoke of sad insomnia, her drawn lips, one might assume that she was shivering with a chill no summer sun might ever warm.

De Poyanne took her limp hand to press a kiss upon it. It trembled in his own. Thus to discover the woman whom he came to interrogate, like a morning-glory in the beating rain, was to make this noble heart forget its suffering at sight of Juliette's. A detail of the physiognomy he knew so well completely overthrew his firmness. In Juliette's sapphire eyes the iris had expanded till it was almost lost to view. What secret storm of pain had so enshrouded his lovely sweetheart's soul? Involuntarily De Poyanne asked himself this question. Impossible, too, not to connect her visible woe in some way with D'Avançon's denunciation of the morning. Though fugitive as flash of lycopodium, these thoughts altered the Count's expression, and Juliette, who had since his entrance divined that he was eaten up with anxiety, now understood that

he had come for an explanation. But what about? Only in Paris since the morning, it was impossible he could have heard of Casal's movements. Besides, she had arranged with herself, during the sleepless night, to tell Henry of her own accord all about these visits. But for that it would be necessary to find him in an open and facile humor, and he came thus so evidently on the rack. It was, no doubt, her letters to Besançon. During the last ten days she had hardly found the energy to trace for him as many lines as formerly she used to cover pages. . . . While these distracting ideas were passing through their minds, Henry and Juliette had already begun to exchange those trite and trivial words that resemble the salutations of fencers before they engage their weapons in earnest.

After the ordinary questions of each other, De Poyanne said:

"I am delighted to hear so good an account of Madame de Nançay's health, and with this fine weather.". . .

"Yes," said Juliette, "for once we have had a real old-fashioned April."

"And Madame de Candolle?"

"I thank you. Things go much better there. She has been so much interested in your campaign."

"Where I entirely failed."

"You will make up for it by new successes in the Chamber."

Heavens! but the old mother and the young Countess, the weather and Parliament, were far enough from their mutual preoccupation. Yet still they both postponed an explanation now inevitable, recoiling and recoiling from it as it drew the nearer. At last the suspense became so

intolerable that Juliette, with her heart on fire, decided to speak out. She took De Poyanne's hand. With a forced smile, and a glance that was almost appealing, she said :

"You look sad, Henry. I see that you are sad. You are angry with me because I have written to you these last days so hastily. But if you knew how much I have suffered, and suffer still, you would forgive me. . . . You would not multiply my pain at sight of yours. Must I once more repeat that I have never been able, that I cannot now, bear to see you unhappy?"

In her gestures, in her phrases, in the look that accompanied both, Juliette was sincere. She was profoundly moved. In the half hour this cruel interview had already lasted, notwithstanding no syllable of reproach had been pronounced by De Poyanne, she felt that he was suffering, and this feeling, which had ever been the first principle of her love for him, still lingered in her heart with a vitality she little dreamt. All the chords of romantic charity, in other days touched by the sad confidences of the Count, began to vibrate in her bosom. It was an awakening of her sentiments, unexpected, unrehearsed, irresistible. If Henry de Poyanne at that moment had been able to arrange with precision the different effects of this interview, he could have employed no better method to show how much he suffered. But Henry thought, on the contrary, so many months of grief had passed over him that he had learned to don the mask of indifference. Now, no longer lost in inner argument, he once more became for Juliette the superior and unhappy being she had so passionately pitied as to grow to love. Till half an hour ago her

dreams of happiness had played round another's image, but ever the magnetism of pity glowed for De Poyanne. She submitted to its power with a passive will. At that moment she was actually unable, as she had said so touchingly and tenderly, to see him suffer. As to Henry, as in his former meditations, it was just this sentiment that he shrank from as from the touch of red-hot iron. He slowly drew his hand away, and said:

"Ah! Juliette, you wrong me. I have never measured your letters by the page. I have loved so to receive them that I thought they were for you a work of love and not of duty."

"Ingrate!" Juliette interrupted, in a tone of tender coquetry, "to think that I could do without writing to you!"

"Yes," cried Poyanne, with a visible effort, "it is better for me to be frank. It is true, your letters have hurt me. Not because they were short and hurried, but I felt, as I feel now, that you were not talking to me through them with an open heart. You wrote them as a journal of your life, but you did not tell me that you were forging every day the links of a new friendship, as I have learnt in the few hours since my return to Paris. That is what has hurt me, very cruelly. Why should I conceal it from you?"

Their eyes were fixed upon each other as the Count thus formulated, with uncompromising clearness, the accusation Madame de Tillière had been about to meet—in her own time. She blushed most deeply, and, in her turn, frowned. In these few words the Count was posed before her, not merely as a sufferer, but as a judge; and

pride began to mingle with sympathy in her woman's heart, so affectionate yet haughty. She responded almost firmly:

"But neither did I, Henry, ever intend to hide from you that. . . . There are some things I wished to tell you by word of mouth rather than write. . . . I know how readily misunderstandings creep into letters. . . . Interrogate—and you may judge me!" . . .

"Friend of my soul!" sighed the Count, with a pure melancholy free from every shade of reproach, "how little do you understand me, or my love. 'Interrogate' you! 'judge' you!—ah! what words for you to use to me. Juliette, I beg you on my knees, look not upon me as a jealous man. I am not jealous. Nor have I the right to be. I respect you too much to be suspicious of you. Have I ever, since you gave me leave to love you, been suspicious of your actions? If you received such and such a person, I may have thought that you might live to regret it, but as for distrusting you, never! Only that you should sit down to write to me, and that you should weigh each phrase in your letter instead of writing freely down your thoughts; that you should cherish fear for me, that is what cuts me to the heart; and what you say about misunderstandings. See, Juliette, it is not these things themselves that cause me so much pain, but what I know remains behind. I perceive that your feelings toward me are changed. I see—ah! let me speak!" insisted he, at a gesture from Juliette. "I have thought thus for a long, long time. I see that our sweet intimacy is over, this happy heart-to-heart existence that was the dearest habit of my life. That I love you, as ever—but that you love me not. This little sign of your new friend-

ship, of your silence—'tis but one in twenty. If I speak thus to you, understand that I attach no more importance to these than to the rest. The only thing I think important is your love. . . . Juliette, if I seem no longer to you what I have seemed, oh, tell me so! I must ask of you: Do you still love me? You say you cannot bear to see me suffer. . . . It is this terrible doubt that makes me suffer. Oh! put an end to it. . . . Even to lose you would be less cruel than not to know either what you wish or what you feel."

Juliette listened to Count Henry; his tone of voice, more and more broken, more and more tender, more and more timid, as he went on, revealed more clearly than his words his inner nature and his depth of passion. Strained toward her with an expression of profoundest suffering, she saw this face, perhaps so plain in common life, transfigured by the charm of a great grief. She understood, what she had doubted now for months, that Poyanne spoke the simple truth when he described his love for her as deathless, and she had the insupportable impression, stamped as it were upon her brain, that if she told this man she no longer loved him, it would be like a blow that should fell him senseless to the earth. How could she nurture for an instant pride, in face of this suppliant tenderness, this pulsing note of deep despair? Henry had put the weapon in her hand, and bade her strike. How could she?

Not one phrase could Juliette articulate that should render her free to stab the man who had so loved her—loved her now. She had promised to become his wife so that he might be happy; and now he stood before her wretched, at her hand. The unconscious desire for a

DO YOU NOT KNOW I LOVE YOU?

new existence which had led to her dangerous relations with Casal, her hidden revolt against her engagement to Poyanne, her wish to maintain her independence till the time came for an explanation, the storm and sorrow of the last few days—what were all these weighed in the balance against this supreme agony, an agony that pierced Juliette to the soul?

Unreasonable tears came to her eyes; she rose, she threw herself upon her knees in front of him; without one after-thought she put her arms round him as one embraces a suffering child, and Henry, passing at one bound from extremest sorrow to a joy unhoped for, trembled like an aspen leaf and murmured:

"You weep, my child! You love me still? No, no; it is not possible. You love me—love me still?"

"Do you not *know* I love you?" answered Juliette, through her tears. "Look you, Henry: I will not ever, ever, ever let you have another instant in your life like that. . . . Why did you not speak sooner? . . . Why did you write—you, too—such cold, cold letters? . . . But it is over . . . No longer sad? Until this moment I knew not how much you are to me. I am your own for life. I swear that I will never see that man again. Be still! I swear it. You must not speak of him again. You will believe me when I say I did not see him for myself but for a friend he loves. . . . But let him stand betwixt us nevermore; you hear me—never. You shall be happy. I will have you happy. Trust me; believe in me and in my love. Let our two lives begin from this instant. Smile, smile; look at me with those eyes that are my joy. You are my dear, dear friend, my Henry, and I love you!"

She looked in the Count's face, which had lost its look of suffering, and glowed with a mysterious ecstasy, for in her heart was all the tenderness that bubbled from her lips. Was it a lie, "she loved him"? She thought she did, just then. But then she knew that the reason she had given for receiving her new friend was false. What mattered all so long as nevermore this torture of her lover's grief should clutch her heart-strings, make her spirit faint? And Henry, showing how profoundly he believed her, cried:

"Swear to me, Juliette, that it is for love you speak!"

"I swear it!" answered she.

"Without your love, I know not what would come of me," said Poyanne. "You say I should have spoken sooner. It is so hard to be misprized when one loves so deeply. If you had told me that you loved me not, I would not have reproached you, dear. I think I should have died of it as men die who have no longer air to breathe. . . . But you speak truly—it is over. Ah! but I think that to experience the joy that fills me now I would be willing to suffer even more. I am so happy, oh! so happy, now!"

"Is it true that you are happy, happy?" said Juliette, with an almost frightened air.

"Ah! true," repeated he, drawing that loved head to his breast, not seeing that her eyes, lately so bright with exaltation, are clouded suddenly with a vision that she would, oh! so willingly, exclude, for she kissed her lover now with a tender passion that would have chased his last doubt away if he had nursed one.

In spite of Henry de Poyanne's years and the deceptions he had suffered, he was too young in heart, too

entirely loyal and straightforward, to suspect that this fervid embrace was due to a renewal of remorse.

Juliette had just recognized, as one might recognize a midnight robber by a flash of lightning, even whilst she was throwing herself in an ecstasy of gracious pity into Henry de Poyanne's arms, that if her life were to be the forfeit, instead of merely her life-long happiness, she would never be able to forget Raymond Casal.

VIII.

BETWEEN TWO LOVES.

"How happy could I be with either!"
—*Beggar's Opera.*

After the departure of Henry de Poyanne, Madame de Tillière experienced for a time a strange feeling of quietude and calm—the sort of over-tired peace that follows difficult decisions. She made her toilette for the afternoon, intending to pay a visit to the dressmaker; but after having directed the coachman to the Rue Faubourg St. Honoré, the task of trying-on seemed so distasteful to her, in her present frame of mind, that she changed the itinerary in favor of the Bois de Boulogne.

The weather was entirely delightful, and to Juliette's lately troubled mind it seemed that an hour or two's solitude in the green alleys of that great heart of Paris would be refreshing. There was a part of it well known to her and to the driver, frequented by very few, especially at that hour of the day, between the second lake and the River Seine, more green, more beautiful than the rest. Thither she directed her carriage, and, strolling amidst the long alleys of lovely trees, might have imagined herself miles in the country. Isolated at once from the world, and protected by the near presence of her equipage, Juliette gave herself without reserve to the revery

of the moment. With almost childish wonder she admired the progress all the tender greenery had made since her last visit, and watched the flickering shadows of the giant oaks upon the new-mown sward. The flowers of spring spread themselves at her feet—snowy Easter daisies with their pink inner sepals, speedwell with its eyes of heavenly blue. Above stretched the settled continental sky of steel-azure, and the nesting birds made the forest vocal with their lovable clamor, as though she had been in the depths of her own dear domain of Nançay. In certain intervals she would come to parks of sombre Scotch firs, where the wind, that grand old harper, whispered its immemorial cantata to the earth in mysterious sighs far overhead, instinct with the imponderable noises of far Niagara or the resounding sea. Juliette sat down on a rustic bench, and as the thoughts of all her love-troubles surged up through her superficial peace, the whistle of a locomotive in the valley brought to her mind the forgotten nearness of the great city.

The peace of dreams—such was the unconscious object Juliette had come to the Bois in search of, and she half found it in this communion with the ever-simple soul of nature. Beauty, without self-knowledge or ambition, such seemed to her the language of the flower; duty, without self-seeking or desire, the sermon of the plant. What thought inhabits vegetable life? To live in the permitted form, to exist in the allotted place, to perform their prearranged functions—nothing more. One has no need to be a philosopher in order to hear, to comprehend, this peaceful continuity of counsel from branch and blossom. It is enough not to shut one's heart to the sweet harmony of surrounding things; there is no necessity to think.

If Madame de Tillière, after her interview with Poyanne, had imagined and hoped that this fair forest walk would bathe her nerves in tranquillity, what a mistake she made! At the end of these lovely alleys, gemmed with emerald turf and draped with the Creator's tapestry, she beheld, instead of the calm visions of other days, the image of this cruelly inevitable thought: after all she had said to Henry, she would be forced to close her door on Raymond Casal forever. Yes, she would have to do it, in virtue of her promise, even though Henry did not exact it from her lips. To listen to a promise is to accept it as a valid pledge. She would have to do it, because these two men, if she failed in her engagement, would be sure, sooner or later, to meet under her roof—and the very thought of the look they would exchange made her heart faint. She would have to do it, in a word, because she was the promised wife of De Poyanne, and because it was her life-intention not to fail him. To see Casal!—it was no longer possible to carry on her self-deception. It would be treason, now she knew *she loved him!*

. . . . . .

Yes; she loved him. The truth of it, against which her unhappy spirit had struggled for days, was clear to her through the pain that clutched her heart-strings at the sudden knowledge that they were forever separated. . . . She loved him. Then how was it that such a love had not been strong enough just now to give her the courage to accept her freedom by taking Henry at his word, and pronouncing the "My heart is yours no longer," he demanded? How, unless it was impossible with truth to pronounce the word of breaking off, unless the sensation of her betrothed's anguish, already, though he knew it not,

betrayed by the defection of her soul, was so powerful as to obliterate her love for Casal, and her natural and innocent longing to be happy?

What insensate hurly-burly of her imagination made it possible to this unhappy woman to give her heart to these men at one and the same time, to divide, as it were, a double allowance of love between two? The whole current of her spirit flowed toward one; but in order to approach him it was necessary to walk over the other; and that she was not strong enough to do. With terrifying force, she realized at last, entirely, the horror of this dictatorship of one whose promised bride she had been now so long of her own free will—though never, never, of her own free will would she rebel. Again she saw those eyes of Henry's, heard his voice. At the recollection, once more her pity tore her heart in twain.

But was it pity?

When we merely pity another we remain unmoved; at any rate, our life remains our own beside this pain that is outside ourselves; whereas Juliette, at the contact of this great agony she beheld in every look and tone of De Poyanne, had felt a mortal pain herself within her heart of hearts, her soul of souls.

The fact of the matter remains, there glows sometimes, not often, in cold humanity a force of pity so intense as to sublime itself into love by its own power. It is no longer possible to separate the sentiments. It was this sort of love that Juliette had for De Poyanne.

At thought of Henry her own personality was lost, her proper life suspended, and yet she felt it was beyond a doubt she loved Casal.

Raymond! She saw him, too, in front of her, with his

boyish smile, his limpid eyes, his noble physiognomy; with the charm there was in his every movement—Raymond, with whom she could no longer deny she had been falling deeper and deeper in love every moment of those delightful fatal weeks; Raymond, at the eleventh hour to part from whom was to enter, of her own accord, the solitary dimness of the tomb.

She loved Casal, but with a strange and morbid love that was not powerful enough to dethrone the former idol of her heart.

If she yet questioned this was love, the civil warfare of her spirit this warm, calm May afternoon would have solved the problem. Amidst these sweet surroundings she felt her eyes fill with tears, her soul dissolve in a passionate longing to have Raymond there with her, to lean upon his arm, look in his face, and that it was permissible. The torrid languor of the atmosphere after the damps of early spring, the aroma of invisible flowers on the zephyr, the promptings of the cloudless sky at this glad season, all revived in Juliette the dream of happiness that sometimes renders one so sad amid these heavenly surroundings. Now she would evoke Raymond in order to try and dream a little longer; now the thought of Henry would come to chase away the cherished vision. A monstrous dualism usurped her being; between two loves she could see nothing but the horizon of despair.

"No, no!" she cried, "I am Henry's for life. I am not responsible for my thoughts; for my actions I am. I will be strong—I will." And she prayed for strength to dominate the sudden distress that seized her, finding a certain encouragement in the lip-utterance of the forbidden name, as she exclaimed:

"Even if Raymond calls, I will not see him."

After two hours of lonely meditation, Juliette reëntered her carriage, having at least chained her light fancies to a firm resolve. But she did not feel that she was physically able to face Casal, and tell him that she would not, could not, evermore receive him. To give orders that he should no longer be admitted would be an unjustifiable proceeding, which he had not deserved. Juliette hit on the expedient of getting Gabrielle de Candolle to request the young man not to revisit the Rue Matignon, under the pretext that the tittle-tattle of the world had reached Madame de Nançay's ears, and created a misunderstanding between mother and daughter. She only saw the weak points of this defensive strategy when broaching it to her friend, to whose house she was driven after her excursion to the Bois de Boulogne.

Gabrielle exclaimed, stroking Juliette's bright hair:

"You know that I will do the slightest thing you bid me, love; but will Raymond believe your reason?"

"Whether he believes it or not," pouted Juliette, "he will understand that it is not my wish to receive him, and he is too much a gentleman to try and force his way."

"He loves you!" objected Gabrielle.

"Oh! do not tell me that!" cried Madame de Tillière nervously; "you must not speak such words."

"But, my sweet, it is to prove to you that he will seek an explanation."

"Well," answered Juliette, in a hollow voice, "if he does, it will be time to repeat to him what he already knows through you."

"Are you quite sure you would be strong enough?"

"Ah!" moaned the widow, hiding her face in her

hands, "I see you no longer believe in me, no longer respect me, after all that I have told you."

"*I* not believe in you? *I* not respect you, my darling?" responded the Countess, taking Juliette in her arms. "Till yesterday afternoon I did not know how much I thought of you, how much I loved you. If you only knew how I lay awake and trembled to think of your coming interview with Poyanne. Not respect you? Why? Because of my cruel, fatal imprudence in failing to divine that your secret engagement was the cause of your unwillingness to accept a new friendship at my hands? For it was I who brought you and Casal together! But it is true, I fear—" She ceased at sight of Juliette's distress, and changed her strain. "Oh! do not listen to me; I was foolish. I will be clever in this matter, for your sake, and quit you of his visits. . . . He will not suspect the cause for which you sacrifice him. Casal will not be jealous. He has no slightest inkling of your affection for the Count. Nor will he dare to question your defence. . . . And this week or next, my sweet one, we will start hand in hand for Nançay or Candolle. And I will care for you and love you like a sister. I will spoil you. I will cure you of your sorrow. But never say to me again I do not love you, or that I love you less. You see I love you more than ever."

"Ah! but you do me good when you speak so," sighed Juliette, placing her head on the faithful breast of her *Saint;* "this is the only place that gives me heart's ease in the wide, wide world. Kiss me again and say I'm *not* a monster."

. . . . . .

This sigh, drawn from the dark deeps of a soul deluged

with the most obscure but intolerable moral trouble that can afflict man or woman, troubles we are ashamed to specify, though mortal, remained forever on Gabrielle's memory. But the Countess had good reason to be prodigal of tender consolation, for she had shown, by her inflection on a single word, that Juliette was no longer quite the same to her. Nothing but the way in which she spoke the word "Poyanne," the visible effort these two syllables cost her. All her enchanting endearments hardly sufficed to obliterate the impression, any more than her reiterated assurances of the success of her mission did away with the effect of her first doubt:

"Will he believe your reason?"

. . . . . .

Leaving the Rue Tilsitt, reassured, at any rate, as to the execution of the plan she had invented, Madame de Tillière went home, even more unhappy than when she started out. Already had an awful hope glided into her haunted soul, that frightened her as though it had been a crime. It is true, she had been sincere with herself in her project of never more receiving Raymond Casal, and throughout her interview with Gabrielle. Withal, she could not help wishing that her friend's first fear might become an accomplished fact, and that the young man would seek an interview direct and definite. By a strange detour of spirit that caused her much remorse, Juliette experienced an irresistible longing, in this hour of eternal separation, to be told by Raymond's own lips that he loved her. A natural inconsequence, for a heart at war with itself. Is it not thus every time we seek to supersede a stronger love by a weaker? Over this strange sentiment vanity has little power. Passion shows its mastery

of egotism, and Juliette could not understand how it was that after her visit to the Rue Tilsitt she was really no more established in herself than before. Divided, as she was, between two incompatible sentiments, it was but natural that she should lean toward the one she was about to immolate upon the altar of logic. All the more so, because the bond that attached her to Poyanne was altogether a negative affection, and lent her soul no joy. With what pain did she admit this to herself, that night and the next morning! She was not strong enough to see this man suffer; therefore she must love him! To spare his agony, she was about to give him her life; yet now that she beheld him glad and happy, she seemed to have no thought save for the other. Was she on this account, as, in the moment of her supreme sorrow, she had implored Gabrielle to tell her—was she on this account a monster?

Full of this fancy, that there was really something unnatural in her love for Casal, Juliette thought: "Poor friend! so noble-minded. At least you shall never have reason to doubt me. I owe you that. My life is yours entirely. How hard it will be to conceal my thoughts—because he loves me—how he loves me!"

And then of Casal:

"He loves me, too, or thinks he does. Or thinks he does? In a fortnight he will have forgotten all about these weeks of sweetest friendship! He will fall back upon a life of pleasure. When one of his friends shall speak my name, he will smile. . . . 'Oh, yes! the little widow I was courting, when her mother forced me to give up the chase. I remember. But it is all over now, all over, long ago!' . . . And my golden dreams of being to him a benign, a beneficial life-influence, of drawing

him from his uneven, reckless path, of making him his worthy self before the world—is all that over, too?

"At least I have proved to him there are good women in the world who will not allow a man to tell them things they should not listen to. But he has always been so simple, and so kind!"

Alas! it is not the same side of our souls that reasons and that feels; and Juliette having, as she thought, broken off all relations with Casal, found herself now more than ever possessed by his image.

The day after her visit to Gabrielle de Candolle, as twelve o'clock approached, she was thinking:

"Raymond is now returning from the Bois. He has found her letter, even if he did not get it this morning. He is asking himself what can she want to say to him. He thinks, perhaps, it is to arrange anew the water party that fell through the other week."

At thought of this relinquished project, a whole panorama of blue water, calm skies, and green hills unrolled itself on her imagination, and she bemoaned the never-to-be hours of sweet conversation on the misty bosom of the ever-flowing Seine.

"What is my daughter thinking of?" said Madame de Nançay, at the breakfast-table. "Has she some hidden sorrow on her mind?"

"My dearest mother, what an idea!" cried she, trembling as though those loving eyes were reading her heart. Vainly she forced a smile and started some lively topic, in the presence of this clear-sighted mother, who shook her head, and silently observed how sadly her dear Juliette's face had changed. What strange sadness had touched those fixed eyelids, on which want of sleep had

set its vampire seal, and paled those cheeks still livid with the salt of tears? Juliette cherished, then, some sentimental secret, and it was unfortunate.

For to suspect her child of any fault, or of remorse, the noble, pious Madame de Nançay was as incapable as she would have been powerless to console could she have guessed the truth. And this absolute confidence her mother placed in her was a fresh grief to Juliette. Now, when so many internal wounds were bleeding, Juliette prayed for solitude, even to her own reproach. In solitude she might give way to the madding march of her emotions. It was a consolation to regain her own little boudoir; and there, anew, her eyes fixed on the clock, she betook herself to the calculation of the minutes and seconds with which we associate, though so far away, the thought and gestures of some loved one.

"One thirty. . . . He is at the Rue Tilsitt; Gabrielle has received him. The room reminds him of our happy hours. Nevermore will they return. . . . She speaks. . . . Heavens! if he should think I am afraid to talk to him myself! . . . No; he regards it simply as a sign of my indifference. But will he believe what Gabrielle tells him? . . . What is it to me whether he believes her or not? He listens. . . . Perhaps, who knows? the whole thing has been a comedy to him, and what Gabrielle says to him is all one. . . . But no, he loved me, and if he did not tell me so, it was because of his respect. . . . What delicacy of heart! Spite of his life! What will he now become? . . . *Mon Dieu!* but this is hard!"

Then, after one of those vague meditations in which our whole soul is absorbed unconsciously in another's, as if awaking from a morbid dream, she cried:

"Half-past two. It is over. If Gabrielle has had no other visitors, she will be here to tell me soon. . . . A ring! It can be only Gabrielle. . . . It *can* be only Gabrielle!"

Madame de Tillière had taken the precaution to deny herself to everybody but the Countess. It may be imagined, therefore, how utterly astounded she was, as she ran a few steps forward to welcome and embrace her expected friend, to find herself face to face with Raymond Casal!

The shock of his unexpected intrusion, coming at a moment when her shattered nerves were at their utmost tension, was too much for her, and she almost fell into the nearest seat. In spite of her usual self-control, and that it was doubly needful now to meet this unwelcome guest with a firm front, Juliette felt herself grow scarlet; and then the life-blood flowed to her distended heart, and left her pale as marble, with little more of stir and will about her than a statue. But she perceived, and with a sort of curious joy, that Casal himself was hardly less agitated. The hazard of the step he had dared to take deprived him of his accustomed presence of mind, and almost of his power of speech. To all appearance, at that moment, he was far enough from the Don Juan of popular opinion, or the modern fop rendered fatuous by facility and much success; he resembled no type of man, in fact, more than the every-day suitor bound by the spontaneous shackles of heart-felt love for a lady who has checked, if not rejected, his addresses.

If Juliette had ever seriously thought Raymond Casal was toying with her affections, his attitude now, far beyond the cunning of the most accomplished comedian to simulate, would have undeceived her. The one sign that

distinguishes true love from false is that every triumph of the former is marked by fresh humility, and of the latter by a certain haughtiness. Instead of the lurid light of victory glinting from his handsome eyes, Raymond's look was dubious and overclouded as he stood before the only woman he had ever loved. He seemed to fear his own audacity, and more to dread the pain he might be giving than to look for any measure of success.

"I trust that you will forgive me, Madame de Tillière," he said with much humility, "if I made use of the name of the Countess Gabrielle to gain admission to your house. I came direct from her and thought to speak to you without delay. It may be that what I have to say to you will explain, if not excuse, my seeming rudeness. . . . But if you wish me now to leave you, or to postpone this interview at your pleasure, only let me know, and I will do exactly as you say."

He spoke in low, submissive tones, almost timidly. Madame de Tillière, on her part, had greatly recovered herself, and looked upon him with a not unfriendly aspect. Whether Casal's ingenuous address had touched her heart, or whether it was her cue not to seem in dread of anything that he might have to say, or whether she was yielding to the seduction of his mere propinquity—which, when we love, is the origin of all our over-kindness—it is certain that Juliette did not play particularly well the character she had pretended to assume, of an indifferent hostess duty-bound to deny a visitor because his presence is unpleasing to the family.

It would have been so simple to rejoin: "I think that Gabrielle has told you all that I can possibly say," and just to add a semi-civil word of social chill that would

forever render a repetition of his audacity impossible! Instead of that, she heard herself repeat, rather than intentionally spoke, in every-day terms, but now how full of future danger, these words:

"*Mon Dieu*, monsieur, I must say that after what Madame de Candolle has probably told you, I scarcely expected a visit from you. But I have no reason for refusing to speak to you or answer you, if you come to ask me, as I think you must, about the rather delicate commission with which I charged her."

"Yes, madame," answered Raymond, seating himself at a respectful distance, and in rather firmer tones. "You have rightly guessed what my presence here has reference to, and you will now allow me to repeat the answer that I made the Countess. Not that you need have, let me assure you, the slightest fear that I will not obey, if you yourself express the wishes she transmitted. . . . I understand the scruples you observe, and harsh as they may seem in my regard, I do not disapprove of them. I say again, and pledge my word of honor, that if, after what I am about to say, you persevere in your decision, this visit shall be my last. . . . I should have but one thing to reproach you with, if the fault were not clearly mine in not having known how to make known the degree of my respect, in fact, my veneration, for you—that you had not made known your wishes to me personally, instead of through a third person, even Madame de Candolle, for then you would have spared this indiscretion, since I should at once have said what I have had it on my mind to tell you for so many days."

"Well," said Juliette, with a half smile, "perhaps it *is* my fault."

She knew already, as though they had been written on Casal's forehead, the words he meant to say; the presentiment made her every fibre thrill; but by a final effort Juliette sought to maintain the conversation at the society level, which, for women, constitutes their best defence. "It was, *perhaps*, my fault, and now I am the sufferer. This interview is doubtless more or less painful to you, and, why not confess it? also to me. There are some things always hard to express in words, particularly when they bear too hardly on one who has not deserved them. . . . But you know my mother's disposition—you have seen her—how little she is of our day; and you may guess how ominous to her appear the slightest hints of spiteful scandal. . . . I have no right to contend with her inclinations. You guess that, too? Do not construe this as a personal grievance; for in six months, a year, I will receive you as I do to-day, with much, so much, esteem—yes, with all sympathy!"

"All that is undeniable," sighed Raymond, bowing, "and once more I accept my sentence. . . . Only this is what I want to plead. In speaking thus to me, you talk to the Casal of society, who was presented to you two months ago—the Casal who was a visitor at your house, as at the houses of Madame de Candolle, Madame d'Arcole, and a score of others. . . . Would you speak to me with such precision if I tell you, madame, that since I have known you my life is absolutely changed? My soul was then without an object; but I have one now. I thought myself used up, my heart a cinder, utterly incapable of any but ephemeral emotions; but now I feel a sentiment that is eternal. It seemed my fate to grow gray, with many a comrade, in the service of the club, the track, the theatre,

I know not what resort of disillusion—nothing in front of me but the hope of killing the future in a vain pursuit of what the world calls pleasure. I see before me now the highest, noblest, most absorbing interest of all my life! . . . I tell you now that weeks would have elapsed ere I had spoken thus if this disastrous interruption had not come. Between the man I was when I sat next to you at Madame de Candolle's and the man I am now, stands a love I had previously neither felt nor imagined—a love compacted of respect and pure devotion; and this is what I wanted you to realize, in order that I might have the right to add when, in six months' time, you have given me leave to come again, if, after that separation, I lay at your feet once more the same heart overflowing with the same love, and if I ask you then to take my name and be my wife, are you quite certain you will answer: '*No*'?"

Since Raymond Casal began to speak his mind, Madame de Tillière knew very well that he had come to say, "I love you;" and, as we have seen, she had schooled herself to accept this declaration rather in the light of a *jeu d'ésprit*, quit with a show of anger if he expressed himself more warmly. She had hoped to remain sufficiently mistress of herself to disguise from him her own distress. But she could not guess that he would call in to the aid of his passion words so caressingly delicate as to pierce her very heart; still less that it was his intention to speak so soon of marriage, strangely unlike the man and his antecedents as such a proposition seemed.

This offer, announced in such language by such a man, constituted a proof, far stronger than any oaths and protestations, in favor of the nobility of sentiment with which Juliette had inspired him. A crude avowal, that would

have betrayed mere passion on Casal's part, she would, unquestionably, have been strong enough to resent immediately, and so have saved herself from further complications. In moments of mere explanation, had she not been able successfully to assume the weapons of the woman of the world? But now how different! In proportion as the man who loved her unveiled the tenderness of his emotion, the trait she had the least expected him to show, an infinite sweetness seemed poured upon her wounded heart. She felt as though her free will would instantly dissolve, and be supplanted by a fainting spell of yieldingness. In another moment, as her eyes fell on a closed case that contained a faded photograph of De Poyanne, she comprehended that her freedom certainly was lost forever unless she there and then set up a barrier against the man who had the power thus to move her, more valid than the poor excuses she had made.

Why did not Juliette at this supreme moment, when the love of her life, the desire of her soul, lay within hand grasp, make some effort to attain emancipation, or, on the other hand, avow to Raymond Casal that she was not free to dispose of her own hand? No more ideally favorable circumstances could have been granted in favor of the first course; no clearer cue could be desired for the second. In either case, how many woes would have been spared her, and the rest!

But admissions which will utterly destroy a lover's hope, however much in love, women will rarely make to those they really care for! Juliette obeyed the common law. Writhing under the supposed necessity of being true to her engagement, she was at the same time unable to hold out to Casal the most remote encouragement by word of

mouth. Her pain determined further subterfuge, and she made answer:

"You see that I have listened to the end, although it was my duty, and I had the right, to stop you at the first. . . . I will answer you in one sentence. Under the most solemn circumstances, I made a vow, should I ever be unhappy enough to become a widow, that I would not remarry. By this oath, advisedly taken, I will abide!"

Later, and often, Juliette was doomed to suffer for this false excuse, bringing up, as it did, the memory of her dead husband. Neither was it in the least like her to mingle such a souvenir with such an interview.

Even as Juliette spoke, Casal's expression grew more grave. He had arrived in the Rue Matignon in the assurance, approved by every passing day for weeks past, that he was loved. Neither had he doubted that the excuse sent him by Madame de Candolle was a merely temporary pretext. Juliette's actions seemed to him dominated by two alternate springs: one that she passionately interested herself in him and in his fate; the other, that she fought against this feeling on account of the mistrust in him created by D'Avançon's recitals, perhaps by others even more damaging, if less spiteful. He had not expected an explicit answer to his suit, but he had anticipated some phrase which, in his exalted frame of mind, would have sent him into exile not unhopefully, as: "Come to me in six months' time, and I will talk to you." Already he had made out a plan to pass the time away; he would have gone again upon the high seas with Lord Herbert Bohun, in his yacht, so certain was he of his love and of Juliette's unchangeability. As oftentimes we see in men who have a fixed idea of woman's little-

ness, when he was fairly in the toils, he thought of the one he loved as different from any of her sex, and passionately claimed for her those very attributes that he denied the others. Not for an instant, therefore, did he question this romantic oath that shattered all his hopes. How, at another time, he would have mocked a friend who had implicitly believed so shallow an invention! But, after all, to credit this excuse of Juliette's was not less strange in Raymond Casal than to offer any woman marriage!

He told the truth about it. The idea of marriage with Juliette had been germinating in his brain for days. It was born of the conviction that this woman was without a lover, and that he, Raymond, never had felt and never would feel a passion in any degree similar to that which she inspired.

But he had the tact to see, in spite of the nature of his emotions, when to insist and when to give way. He felt that Juliette was troubled to the soul, but also that this pain would change to anger if he questioned her will too far. If she weakened, there might yet be a chance for him; or, in her last adieu, some final phrase might give him more than all the ground that he had lost. He could not argue very clearly just then, for he was rather shaken with emotion and with his reception; but so accustomed was he to adventures—scarcely, though, of this calibre—that he returned to the charge mechanically, as an old soldier, at the word of command, struggles for the first place in the forlorn hope.

"Then, madame, inasmuch as things stand thus, nothing remains but for me to say farewell, and forever. I know what now remains for me to do!" . . .

Juliette had risen, too. Her nerves were on the rack so cruelly, her thoughts so strained, that she saw behind these words an awful meaning, and involuntarily cried:

"Ah! you must not leave me without swearing that you——"

"Without swearing that I will not kill myself," said Casal, a little ironically. "For that was what you were thinking of. Nay, do not be the least afraid of having my death on your conscience. . . . I simply meant to say that nothing's left me but to go back to my old life. It never did amuse me much; still less will do so *now;* but it may help me to forget you. Allow me to give you one last piece of advice"—facing Juliette with a stern look—"never again play with a man's heart, however much evil has been told you of that man. In the first place, it is disloyal, and then you run the risk of having it resented. . . . I tell you once again, notwithstanding all your *friends* may think, in my sight the world is nothing—nothing!"

"I?" cried Juliette, in agony—"I play with you? Ah! you do not think that of me—you cannot think it."

She had approached him at these words. Observing this, he took her hand. Juliette did not withdraw it. In a burning fever was the little hand he pressed so tenderly. He drew her to him. Still no repulse. She was at the end of her strength, and on the eve of an eternal farewell with the man who had the same power over her heart as the sun over the convolvulus of morning her courage failed her and her love betrayed her. He spoke in penetrating and passionate tones:

"No, no; it is not so! You have not played with me. Yes, you have been sincere from the first day till this very

instant. You never have been and you are not a coquette. And since you have not played with me, do you know the meaning of it all? . . . Proud as you are, oh! let me tell you: it means that you divined my sentiments, that they touched your heart, and that you share them—it means *you love me!*

"Nay, do not answer me. You love me. I have felt it so often during these weeks. At this instant I feel it anew. If I ever have doubted it, your pardon! . . . Do not speak. And now let me repeat: we love each other. I can understand how and when you promised never more to marry; but what avail the promises of children, weighed with love, promises that it is neither right to give nor to exact, since no one has the right to vow that they will cease to live, will cease to breathe, will close their souls for evermore to beauty, light, and love?"

. . . . . .

Raymond spoke these words with his face close to Juliette's. He drew her nearer yet to him, and felt her head decline upon his breast. He bent to press a kiss upon her lips.

Fear prevented the caress. Juliette's eyelids were closed, and her face, her lips, were white as snow. Excess of emotion had caused her to faint.

Raymond Casal lifted her in his arms and laid her gently on a sofa, terrified with her pallor, and searching for the salts for water. Five minutes passed as he knelt by her side, and chafed her lifeless hands. Finally she opened her eyes, and passed her hands over her face. Seeing Casal on his knees, memory came back to her, with all its terrors worse compounded. Drawing herself away in dread, she cried:

"Go, go! I have your word to do what I tell you. Go away; you are *killing* me!"

He wished to speak, to take her hand. She cried again: "Away! I have your word!"

He had no opportunity to answer, for Juliette pressed the electric button at her elbow. At this he had no choice. A footman entered.

"Excuse me now, Monsieur Casal," she said with formal politeness; "one of my fainting spells is threatened. I must leave you. . . .

"François, when you have shown this gentleman the door, bid my maid come to me at once. I am exceedingly unwell."

IX.

CASAL JEALOUS.

"This is a passion working in the dark,
Freighted with phrensy, apt to miss its mark."
—*Old Play.*

Not for one moment, during this scene with Juliette, did Casal doubt her truthfulness. He believed in the supposititious objections of her mother. He believed in the widow's mysterious vow never to remarry. In order to avert an explosion of wills between Henry and Raymond, Madame de Tillière had thought of numberless excuses, any one of which would have been credited by this unbeliever in feminine perfection. The magnetic influence this woman had over Casal was such that neither that afternoon, nor the next day, nor the next, did any counteractive plan enter his head. He had satisfied himself that Juliette loved him, but was unwilling to receive his visits; yet Casal was unable to frame any method of setting his affection against Juliette's resolution. In a word, he was over head and ears in love—and the awakening was liable to be proportionately terrible.

Three days had passed since Juliette fainted in his arms—three days of devouring anxiety and contradictory desires and intentions, during which he had scribbled

a dozen love-born sketches of letters to be written to Juliette, only to tear them all to flinders, reasoning thus:

"If I persecute her, she will only think the worse of me; what is the use of it?"

Casal might have thus continued to suffer in silence for weeks, if not months, had not the accidental knowledge of a little fact supervened, which produced on him the same effect as the mesmeric whisper to awaken has upon the somnambulist's ear. A small, an almost insignificant fact: but is there anything beneath the notice of the anxious heart?

It might have been two o'clock in the afternoon, and Raymond, who had accepted an invitation to breakfast with Mosé at the Café Anglais, to meet an Indian princelet on his way through Paris, was returning alone on foot. He had attended the little party chiefly not to be left to his own thoughts. The young man—oh! what a fall was there for one of the leaders of the world of Paris!—was following the sidewalk of the Rue de la Paix, in order to be able to spy into the passing carriages and the fashionable shops, in the unavowed but boyish hope of setting eyes for a few moments on the woman he was ever thinking of. His heart beat faster as he saw the brown bay horse and liveries of Juliette's equipage. The brougham was coming out of Rue des Capucines. A block in the vehicles enabled him to hasten and present himself on the pavement in such a way that Juliette could hardly evade his salutation. Instead of her lovely face with its tender sapphire eyes and classic profile, he encountered the wrinkled visage and fixed gaze of Madame de Nançay, that ever-suspicious mother who was supposed to have shut the door of the Rue Matignon in his face. The

good old lady recognized him too; and it was almost with stupefaction that he beheld her not only return his bow, but with the most unmistakably gracious inclination of the head, and a vitally friendly smile on those lips and in those eyes so hardened by a hundred sorrows. A Parisian is not liable to be mistaken in these things. There are so many ways a lady may express indifference by a bow, but there is only one to show her cordiality. On the few occasions Casal had met Madame de Nançay, he had much pleased and interested her. Perhaps it was by his discreet yet genial bearing, more probably because of her instinctive perception of the pure affection Raymond cherished for her daughter; possibly, indeed, because in spite of all she might have heard in his disfavor, she looked on Casal as a possible husband for her darling. But now, this visible good will exchanged by a look from the woman he had been led to believe held him in a holy horror, was inexplicable. The contrast between the tale told by Madame de Candolle and the evidence of his own eyes was too great for any man of sense not to be thereby astounded.

"It is very strange," he thought; "why does she salute me with such exceeding amiability, after having demanded that I should never more cross her threshold? . . . If this is hypocrisy, it is futile. . . . I am *not* the dupe of my imagination; here she was an instant ago, bearing an even more evident welcome in her smile than when I saw her a fortnight ago in the Rue Matignon for the last time. . . . There is no sense in it."

Raymond ran up the stairs of the Mirlitons full of these reflections; and in his afternoon bouts of fencing, pounded his buttoned foil against the ribs of various adversaries as spitefully as though they had been rivals for

the hand of Juliette. And all the time he kept thinking of Madame de Nançay's kindly old face at the carriage-window, and repeating automatically: "There is no sense in it." On his way home these ideas and doubts developed into a monologue.

"It is no use talking, my sweet friend. . . . Madame your mother has nothing, absolutely nothing, against me. So much is evident. Besides, where was my common sense to admit that a prudent mamma, who knows the world, would ask her daughter not to receive the compromising visits of a certain man? As if the refusal to admit him would not still further compromise her with her friends, her guests, and her relations!

"It follows, this discussion with the mother must have been a fabrication. Madame de Tillière invented such and such a method of putting me off. . . . This exercise of her imagination is most unlike her simple and straightforward character, unless—unless——"

The hypothesis staggered him. It was painful in the extreme, since it implied that Juliette, not to mince the matter, had lied to him. When a woman has told you a lie about one thing, there is nothing on earth to prevent her telling you a lie about twenty. In Shakespeare's magnificent study of jealousy, the incomparable analyst of humanity's passion has not neglected to mark the influence of analogy on suspicion. The primary speck of virus is inoculated when Brabantio says:

"She has deceived her father, and may thee!" And Iago harps upon the same deception, and on others like it. Every man who has loved knows this: that the first mistrust marks a mental Rubicon never more to be recrossed. Thus a sort of animal instinct impels us to fight

against our realization of the first lie. We prefer, as long as we can, to ignore it with the vague reservation that there are certain allowances we wot not of that *must* be made. Casal, who had too manly a mind not to prefer the truth, however bitter, to ever so sweet an illusion, continued his pitiless analysis :

"Unless *what?* Well, and why should she not? I have been taken in ; that is all there is about it. Better men than I have been bewitched by women who had neither Juliette's eyes, smile, voice, nor manners. It was absolutely natural on her part to lie to me ; for she wished to get shut of me, and I had given her no excuse. It was therefore necessary for her to *invent* one ; that was only logical.

"But why deny my visits? . . . Because of that oath of hers? A vow made to her husband as he was going into battle? . . . This story hasn't much more sense in it than the other! When I began to pay attention to her, she knew just as much about the vow as ever she did. My courtship could have in view only one end—marriage ; *otherwise* she would have closed the door in my face. The oath existed then, if it existed ever. And yet she let me go on. . . . If it existed ever? And if it doesn't exist? If it is merely a phantasmagoric oath, as her mother's objections to me were imaginary? . . . Come, let us see what was below-board in this sudden rupture! Monsieur Casal, they have been amusing themselves with thee as though thou'dst been a Brittany joskin!" . . .

This use of trivial and slang terms in his soliloquies marked the disappearance from the scene of Casal sentimental, and the reappearance of Casal the cynic. An awakening breath had opened the eyes of the sleep-

walker. The crisis of this first disenchantment was so acutely felt that our ex-cherub of the Rue Matignon spent the evening with Lord Herbert Bohun, in the endeavor, not altogether vain, to chase away regrets and disappointments with the whip of wine. For a dissipation of this kind, no choicer companion could be chosen than the alcohol-loving Englishman, who poured the different vintages down his throat with the regularity of an automaton, and was able, at the finish of the evening, to come to "attention" with the air of an old campaigner. Casal did not indulge in confidences; in fact, to do so would have been superfluous, for on these occasions Lord Herbert was neither a talker nor listener. He had systematized what the Germans call the "brandy passion," and could count on the fingers of one hand the evenings in the last twelve months when he went to bed sober. The only person in the world Bohun seemed to care for was Casal. How came this? Was it possible that this taste for drink and this odd friendship both sprang from one cause?

Lord Herbert in his youth had been the lover of a lady who deceived him, with all Paris for a witness. Casal had been the only one to warn him. He had never forgotten Raymond for this intended kindness, and in his maddest moments always seemed to have a vague notion of what was passing in his crony's mind. This very night, on parting, he wrung Raymond's hand, and with the lightning glance of inspiration and intuition that so often comes to men who are much the worse for drink, muttered in English: "*She was false as water!*" And to Lord Bohun, for anybody to be as false as *water* meant really something very false indeed; for water was a thing for which he had no use, save as a diluent of "Jamieson" or

"Kinahan," and for his morning "tub," and even then he salted it. It happened that Herbert Bohun's tipsy lucubration on womankind chimed only too well with Raymond's sentiments; and it was with difficulty, in the midst of his cups, that he retained sufficient self-control to keep his own counsel.

"Yes, Herbert is right," he thought, early the next morning, spurring Téméraire to the top of his bent through the deserted Bois, under a gray and forbidding sky that still further dispirited his wine-soddened nerves. "The best woman on earth isn't worth one pang. . . . But Juliette!—a hypocrite? It *must* be so, for she has *twice* lied to me; and, with the same facility, could go on lying to me as often as occasion rose. Behind this rupture there lurks something else. . . . What can it be?"

He would neither answer the self-propounded question nor speak the word that preyed upon his heart. But he recognized dimly that the influence of one of his own sex was the only possible key to the riddle of the lady's conduct. As an outward mark of this internal tumult, the noble Téméraire arrived at its quarters bathed in foam, gaping pink nostrils for sufficient breath.

In the next place, Casal, at two o'clock, propelled by some internal power beyond his control, directed his footsteps to the Rue Matignon. Wherefore? . . . He knew in advance that in all likelihood Madame de Tillière had left orders that he should not be admitted. But he reckoned that there was still one chance in a hundred the order had not been given. In that case he would see her, and demand to know the true and genuine motive of her strange conduct from herself. With emotion he recognized the long, ivy-covered wall, the Mansard roof

of the old house, the very smoke that curled so peacefully upward from, perhaps, *her* salon. He entered the courtyard without speaking to the *concierge*, marching straight to the glass porch he knew so well. Wishes were so much the ancestors of his thoughts in this case that it was with a sort of stupid pain he received his answer, a reply his common sense might have assured him of, from the inscrutable footman :

" Madame de Tillière is not at home."

"I might have known as much," thought Casal, "and it was but a mean-spirited action on my part to come here for the news ! "

He went off at this thought, with the listless step of a man without an object, when, looking up with the hunter's falcon eye, he recognized coming in the opposite direction, on the other side of the street, a gentleman whom he did not know particularly well, and with whom he exchanged a hesitating bow.

" Parbleu ! " he cried, suddenly, " it is the Count Henry de Poyanne. . . . I have hit the nail on the head this time by sheer accident. . . . He is friendly with Juliette. I remember Madame de Candolle speaking of him several times. . . . Perhaps he is going to her house ? . . . I will wait and see if they let him in. . . . If they do, I need no longer doubt why the door was closed upon me."

He turned his head to survey the man in whom as yet he hardly suspected a rival, and saw that Poyanne, on the threshold of the house he had just quitted, had turned, too, and was scanning him in the same sort of way. The two men stood facing each other for a few moments, motionless, their eyes each other's hostile messengers. Then

the Count pushed open the entrance door, and was lost to sight.

"Aha!" exclaimed Casal, "I have you, my gentleman. She receives *him*, but not *me*. Why on earth, though, should he take so much notice of *me?* On the rare occasions we have met at Pauline's, we hardly spoke to each other. . . . Can Madame de Tillière have let out that I am no longer on her visiting list? On what terms are these two? It is the only one of her friends I have not seen in her company. We have spoken of him. Let me see, let me see: how, and in what way?"

Suddenly he remembered a little scene which at the time had passed unnoted; but this meeting at the threshold brought it back to his recollection as vividly as though it had occurred the previous evening. It occurred at Madame de Candolle's. Juliette was in one of her rare happy moods. The Countess had accidentally pronounced the name of the great orator, and Casal had set himself to make a little harmless fun of him. With his usual tact, he instantly perceived that he was on the wrong track, for neither of the two friends answered him a word, and Madame de Tillière's expression had changed to an unmistakable frown. The talk shifted, and Juliette still only spoke in monosyllables. Casal remembered every detail of the scene. . . . What connection, then, had these impressions with what was now upon his mind? He could hardly sum up, as yet. But the image of Poyanne standing at the portal, taking such particular notice of himself, evicted, was with him all the afternoon. Having encountered the young marquis in the Tuileries tennis-court, he by and by casually asked:

"You know De Poyanne, Norbert?"

"Very well. Why do you ask?"

"Because I am to dine with him at an early date. What sort of a man is he?"

"Talented, but"—and the young marquis made a slang gesture with his tennis-bat—"in the clouds."

"And how does he stand with the ladies?"

"One of the elect. His wife ran away from him, and lives at Florence. As for him, none of us knows if he has formed another attachment. Still," said the handsome boy, laughing, "we *have* sometimes thought that Madame de Candolle had a sneaking fondness for him. . . . She used to be in the gallery every time he spoke, with one of her friends that put in an occasional appearance in the Countess's opera-box, a blonde, rather insipid, but glorious eyes. Do you catch on?"

"Hardly," answered Raymond, who instantly recognized Juliette in this thumb-nail sketch. "But," added he, "it is at this very Madame de Candolle's house that we are to dine—or, rather, were to have dined—in company. He was away in the country, and the party fell through."

"He has been back some five days, or so," said De Môle; "we sit together on a parliamentary commission. . . . He was on a political campaign in the Doubs, which turned out a rank fizzle."

This dialogue between the two tennis players was interrupted by innumerable mistakes in the game committed by Casal, at other times one of the best players in Paris. Raymond, in fact, was on thorns. His suspicions had a new field, and a very weedy field it was, to play about in! When a man is growing genuinely jealous, his suspicious instincts become almost as acute

as those of a wild Indian on the war-path. How quickly was he now approaching the fatal end of the chase! How infallibly the broken twigs, the foot-printed grass, led him on to the verge of the odious quarry!

The encounter with Madame de Nançay had caused him to doubt Juliette's first excuse. This doubt brought up another—it led him to mistrust the story of the vow; and that second suspicion, to begin to doubt Juliette's veracity all round the compass. The lightning exchange of looks betwixt himself and De Poyanne focussed his attention on that friend of hers. Finding out how he stood with the sex, and that his speeches were attended every night by Juliette, and then that the return of the Count coincided with his own dismissal, was more than enough to superinduce a new and still more acute attack of jealousy. His Parisian experience, so long charmed to sleep by the enchantments of a new and novel love, rendered the crisis more violent. It went against his grain to suspect the woman who was so dear to him; but that evening, unable to bear even the mechanical society of Lord Bohun, he soliloquized in his own rooms, poisoning himself, contrary to his wont, with the fumes of innumerable opiatized cigarettes:

"Yes, there is certainly a man behind her resolutions. It is too clear, too plain, too mathematical to be further doubted. . . . And to induce Juliette to take any more energetic step than to hint to me to come not quite so often, somebody must have interfered with an 'Either him—or me!' . . . And that somebody was Poyanne? Warned by whom? No doubt D'Avançon; it is too like his handiwork. Then, his look! But she has no lover; or, if she has, she is the greatest jilt that I ever met—even I,

Raymond Casal." And he laughed at himself for his credulity. "Why should she not be a flirt any more than the rest of them? It must have been confoundedly amusing to her to take me in, to roll me through the mud with her little feet, after all the evil she had heard of me. She had nothing better on hand this spring. I was an interesting clown. . . . Now the real heavy man has taken the stage. The poor old mother, the awful oath, the turnip-and-candle ghost of the dead soldier—I swallowed them one and all, and the game is played. . . .

"But, no; she was in earnest. Cross and banner only forced her door at the beginning. At my first visit, her changing color; her manner at the Opera; then at Madame de Candolle's; then at her own house—all so natural, so non-theatrical! Her sadness at the last. Why is she so much bound up, then, in De Poyanne, while all the time she loves me?" Such thoughts drove him to the verge of madness.

"This sort of uncertainty cannot continue. I must and will know all!" he cried.

How many thousand lovers, husbands, tortured almost to death by doubt, have breathed the same defiance to pursuing fate!

To know, to hold in hand the proof, with which one can at the long last weigh up the sort of person we have had to deal with—this, to the jealous mind, is what the running water is to the parched desert wanderer; the house of refuge to the frozen, famished vagabond; the solid land to the storm-defeated mariner! To know, to be quite sure!

Looking at every possible side of this question of relationship between De Poyanne and Madame de Tillière, Casal

came to the conclusion that the Countess Gabrielle, no doubt, knew all about it. And she was the only person with whom he was free to talk upon the subject. But how to snatch the secret from that faithful friend? This was how he solved the problem, after an infinity of thought: Gabrielle really loved her friend of the Rue Matignon. If there was anything between those two, the Countess would now be certainly anxious to know how he, Raymond, regarded the question after all that had occurred. Under these circumstances, suppose he went to her direct, with the object of startling her into an explanation, and were to say to her: "I know all." Then he could profit by her surprise to name some person for whom he was very well aware Juliette could entertain no particular regard. The Countess would defend Madame de Tillière. Then he would burst out with De Poyanne's name, in order to see if her defence was identical or dissimilar. Mistress of herself as that lady was, there were many chances of disconcerting her, and she would repel more vigorously the true than the false accusation. The ingenuity of the plan so approved itself to Casal that he resolved to execute it that same day; and by two o'clock, accordingly, he was on his way to the salon of the Rue de Tilsitt, where, in the society of Madame de Candolle and her lovely friend, he had tasted so many sweet hours of innocent companionship. The souvenir made him sick at heart. As he entered, Gabrielle, he saw, was not alone; Alfred Mosé was paying a visit. Hardly could Casal conceal his chagrin and impatience, such was the disorder into which jealousy had thrown him. Happily, Mosé possessed a fund of finesse which enabled him to see that his young friend had something particular to say to Gabrielle; and,

after remaining long enough to show that he did not feel he was being uncivilly expelled, he took his leave. The effort Madame de Candolle made to retain him was of no avail, for he believed her kindness was assumed, whereas the poor woman, frightened by the expression of Casal's eyes, and guessing what was coming, would have been only too glad if Mosé had remained.

Raymond commenced the attack with a brusqueness he very properly guessed would be the best method of surprising the Countess into the betrayal of the secret that was to slay his love.

"Do you know," he said, as soon as the banker was gone, "it was not nice of you and Madame de Tillière to make fun of me in the way it has pleased you to do."

He spoke in his most indifferent tone, not as one who has unmasked an act of hypocrisy, and asks no better than to confront the one who has misled him; but he was less successful in concealing the cruel irony that shone from his stern eyes. It was with strange anxiety that Gabrielle replied: "Pray, explain yourself." And added: "When you speak of my friend, Madame de Tillière, and myself, you need not adopt such a satirical air; it is sufficiently misplaced."

At every risk, the brave and haughty little woman must carry things with a high hand, if only in order to cut short the interview, and the more so if he turned and attacked her from the expected quarter. Casal suspected something; that was clear. How much?

"No," repeated Raymond, "it was not nice of either of you. Why mix Madame de Nançay's name up with the business when it would have been so exceedingly easy for your friend to have told me bravely, simply, 'Monsieur,

you are a gentleman. I trust you will know how to receive what I tell you. I am not free to receive your attentions. Your visits annoy me, and upset my life. Pray do not call on me again.' "

"You continue to speak in riddles," said Madame de Candolle, frowning and taking up a piece of crochet-work, "but perhaps it is better so. . . . You have neglected me for several days; you have returned to your old associations, without doubt, and I fear that in finding your way to the Rue Tilsitt, you have mistaken the street."

"It is very well, madame. If you desire," he went on, still more harshly, "that I should put the dots on the i's, I will go straight to the point. . . . I know—do you follow me?—I know that Madame de Nançay had nothing to do with her daughter's resolutions. It was a man, and not a woman, who demanded that I should be debarred the right of way, and I know his name."

If he had expected to surprise some tell-tale emotion on the delicate face of the Countess, he was soon undeceived, for her placid eyes followed her lissome fingers on the needle as though the other were only giving her the ordinary news of the day. Her lips remained unmoved; they even showed a slight expression of disdain. But, faithful friend though she was to Juliette, she was a woman; therefore, had a woman's curiosity. And she committed the mistake of allowing Raymond to keep on, in order to know more.

"Ah!" he insisted, "you cannot answer me. But, nevertheless, you know that it is rather hard on me to be the scapegoat of the jealousies of whom?—of a Monsieur Félix Mirant, a painter of peonies and tulips, who considers himself a grand seigneur because he dresses in velvet,

and makes a hundred thousand francs a year by throwing paint-pots at white canvas."

By these exaggerated traits of the man, Casal thought to substantiate his fictitious jealousy with the Countess, and to surprise her to a demonstration. While speaking of Mirant, he was all the while thinking of Poyanne, and he had no difficulty in lending the requisite note of scolding to his voice, nor in causing his face to bear the outward semblances of love's disquiet. The Countess fell into the trap. Reassured by the false scent upon which Raymond had set out a-hunting, and thinking all danger over for the day, she laughed a little laugh, as one might do over a child who has said something at once wrong and funny.

"But you are moonstruck, my poor friend, moonstruck to the verge of lunacy. Mirant with rights of lock and key over Madame de Tillière! I cannot even feel angry with you! Mirant? Why not D'Artelles? Why not Prosny? Why not D'Avançon? While you *are* at it, better distrust D'Avançon. I assure you that the assiduities of a man so dangerous to the ladies would be an excellent subject for one who is such a judge of character as you have turned out."

"Well, and suppose it *isn't* Mirant," said Casal, with such meaning sarcasm that Madame de Candolle once more cast down her eyes, and drew the deep breath of a mental wrestler.

"If it isn't Mirant?" repeated she, almost timidly.

"It is the *friend* of hers who came back precisely on the day I got my walking-ticket, Monsieur Le Comte Henri de Poyanne."

"Listen, Monsieur Casal," answered Gabrielle, this time

without a smile. "I have ever defended you when others attacked you; have ever said that you were better than your reputation, which, by the way, is detestable. Just now I was unwilling to take you seriously. . . . But if you mean seriously in this atrocious way to suspect a woman who happens to be my best friend, whom you have known through me and at my house, and if you are going about hawking your calumnies through Paris as you have hawked them here, let me tell you that it is a vile, abominable action, and I will not allow it. . . . Madame de Tillière has been absolutely loyal to you. She had certain presentiments I overruled. She received you without the faintest coquetry. Certain difficulties with her mother rendered relations with you distressing, almost impossible. . . . She told you of them frankly, and instead of obeying her you calumniate her, and tease your imagination for innuendoes on her friends. It is an insult to us both, monsieur—an insult!"

"You are in the right, madame," said Raymond after a long silence, "and I ask you to forgive me. I promise you," he added, in a low tone, "that I will never speak to you of Madame de Tillière again."

"And that you will never believe what you have said of her?" insisted the Countess.

"And that I will never believe what I have said of her," replied Casal, who was now willing to turn the conversation into other channels. But this time he did not succeed in deceiving Gabrielle, who, nevertheless, sought to know no more. She reproached herself bitterly for not having used the only weapon that will ward off the suspicions of a jealous man—silence. And she felt, without quite guessing Raymond's ruse, that she had said too

much. For a long, long time after Casal had gone, she sat with her hand supporting her fair head, thinking of the words that had passed, and wondering if she had better warn Juliette of her danger. For that there was fresh danger she had the same presentiment as when at first she insisted that Casal would not believe in the concocted excuses. Gabrielle was alarmed at the unexpected depths of passion in the man's nature.

"Yes," she concluded; "I will go to the Rue Matignon, and at once, to warn her. After all, he can do nothing, save annoy her with a letter or a scene. How did he find it out, I wonder?"

. . . . . .

This trial of wit with Madame de Candolle was a further proof of what Casal before had dimly thought. By defending her friend so lightly against the Mirant supposition, so spitefully at mention of Poyanne's name, the arena for jealousy was now quite circumscribed. It was clear the Countess had not attached equal gravity to the two insinuations. Why, unless the second was the truer? As Casal emerged from the Rue Tilsitt, he suffered from that renewed fever the jealous know so well—when some fresh fact has fired their already morbid imaginings. "No more doubt of it!" he cried, as he turned on foot into the Bois de Boulogne to try and chase away his mental pain by one of those forced marches that seldom, under like circumstances, fatigue the limbs. "Poyanne is the man who has had me turned away from her house!"

The next few days Casal passed in company with his friend Lord Bohun, a prey to inconsidered jealousy. He was not sufficiently acquainted with the past to be able to reconstitute Juliette's history, and knew nothing of the

terrible struggle that had so recently been going on within her, and was still in progress—that desperate duel to the death between love and pity, between her natural longing for happiness and the necessity of being faithful to her engagement. Juliette, tenderest of mortals, and simplest in intention, appeared to him an enigma of duplicity, as monstrous now as she had seemed charming hitherto. Was he enough of a victim? Had he with sufficient folly judged her noble, dignified, and innocent, while all the time she had been using him as a puppet, to pass away her leisure hours till her lover came home from the country, watching the effect upon him of her clever conjuring?

A lover, yes; but he had even yet no proof. And proof he still demanded.

Such was the temper this man had wrought himself into as, a week after his visit to Madame de Candolle, he found himself in his fauteuil at the Theatre Français, the last Friday of the season. In spite of the suffering he was undergoing, sprung of a fighting race, he sought every occasion for company; and, after spending the day in his customary haunts of sport and exercise, he would pass the evenings in the treadmill of society, just as if the twin demons of love and jealousy were not tugging at his coat-tails all the while!

And there was always the chance at the opera or theatre of a sight of Juliette, though he never, as yet, had encountered her since she fell fainting in his arms, and woke to send him from her door. In vain he tried to drown the pleading voice that told him Juliette was good and pure. The voice of charity—if jealousy would only listen!—what tender echoes does it not awaken in our hearts in favor of the one we so misjudge! In spite of

his harsher judgments, Casal had to admit in this absence a certain sign that Juliette's suffering in their latest interview was not assumed. One of those inexplicable superstitions lovers sometimes have convinced him that she had not quitted Paris. All could not yet be over between them, he even hoped, without a fresh, decisive explanation.

Madame de Candolle's box remained empty. All of a sudden, three rows in front of him, and on the left, his wandering eyes encountered the visage, turned toward him, too, of Henry de Poyanne. As in the Rue Matignon, this look only lasted a few seconds, and the Count instantly appeared reoccupied with what was going forward on the stage. Raymond was so placed that he had no need to turn in order to see his rival. He could, without attracting attention, observe every detail of the orator's figure, his slender shoulders, his thoughtful head, his worn hands, now fingering the opera-glass with what Casal not wrongly deemed a touch of nervous preoccupation. He was himself put out. When we come into the actual presence of the man we think possesses the heart of the woman we love, in some the principle of repulsion chills us to the marrow; in others it rouses a sustained rage, to the red eyes of which murder seems a likely pastime. The strangest frenzies have us for the moment in their grip, so that we seem no longer ourselves, but human beings with the soul of some wild animal. Thus, as he contemplated the rival who had never been off his mind for so many weary weeks, a singular, a mad idea seized, suddenly, Casal. He had an intuition that he saw before him a chance to get the long-desired proof. This time he would turn the doubtful probabilities of Madame de Can-

dolle's conversation into utter certainty. He was aware that Poyanne had behaved as a hero during the war, had fought a duel at Besançon with the man to whom he owed his life's unhappiness. He had, then, in front of him a man too brave to put up with the least affront.

"Let me reason," he thought. "If I accost him between the acts, and, without a witness, see if he will put up with one of those contemptuous insults that no man of his character tolerates, unless there are overwhelming reasons in the background, I shall shortly know all. If it was really he who put me out of doors, at any price he will be afraid that this woman's name should be pronounced between us, or on account of us, and he will hesitate to fight me. If there is nothing between them, he will stop me at the first word, and then, either I will run him through, or he me. . . . One never knows beforehand, which. . . . At this moment, a duel would amuse me. And I shall have my proof. If he sings small, it is indeed a proof, and undeniable."

No sooner was this insensate idea conceived than executed. If Raymond Casal's every nerve was strained as when a man is about to fight another knife to knife, not one of his acquaintances that shook him by the hand after the curtain had fallen was aware of it. He posted himself at the passage-entry, in order to make certain of Poyanne. Courteously he accosted him.

"Will you do me the honor, sir, of according me a moment's conversation? Here, if you please." And he indicated an angle in the lobby that was out of the way of the moving crowd.

"I am listening, monsieur," answered De Poyanne, visibly startled at this style of conversation. He had the

immediate feeling that his interlocutor wished to speak about Juliette, but thought : "It is impossible. Besides, he is too much a gentleman."

But the other spoke in a low tone, as if merely exchanging some little confidence, or club invention :

"It is a very simple matter, monsieur, and I will not keep you long. Only, I want to know if you have any particular reason for scrutinizing me as you did just now, repeatedly, and with an insistance which, I regret to tell you, doesn't suit me in the very least."

"There is some misunderstanding, monsieur," said Poyanne. He was very pale, and made a visible effort to preserve his calmness. "For I forgot, since the beginning of the last act, that you were in the theatre."

"I am extremely sorry to have to contradict you, monsieur," returned Raymond. "I repeat that you fixed your eyes on me offensively several consecutive times ; and as this is not the first time such a thing has occurred, I wished to tell you to your face that I am ready, if need be, to prevent you from looking at me that way again."

As he pronounced these words, carrying with them such extraordinary and uncalled-for insolence, he was able to follow, on the Count's face, the strife between outraged manhood and the firm resolution to reveal nothing. Poyanne perceived, and reasoned to himself : "Casal knows that Madame de Tillière has sent him away on my account. He guesses, perhaps, that she is engaged to me ; he cannot know it. A man capable of this sudden outbreak would be certain to give to the world her name, if it came to a duel. I must, at all hazards, avoid that."

He tamed himself anew, and said :

"Once more, I affirm, monsieur, that you are assuredly mistaken. I have never had the slightest motive to look at you offensively, and I have no intention of beginning to do so after an interview which has not the least occasion, therefore, to prolong itself, and which I beg you now to terminate."

"As things stand," said Casal, insultingly, "I see I have no longer any need to talk further to a—*coward!*"

This phrase left his lips in spite of himself. It was absolutely foreign to his plan of simple inquiry. But finding the Count at once so troubled, and so much the master of his trouble, so sensible and so deliberately disposed to avoid a quarrel, he had, as in the interview with Gabrielle, a further proof of his suspicions. This sufficed to raise his fury and jealousy to such a pitch that the irreparable word slipped from him without reflection. Of course he knew no man of honor, lover or not, would let it pass.

"Monsieur," said the Count, "I answered you as I did just now because I thought you spoke in good faith. I see you seek to fix a serious quarrel on me—and that you wish a meeting. You shall have it. I know not why you meddle with one who never has interfered with you. But I do not allow any person in the world to talk to me as you have done; and I shall have the honor to send you two of my friends—on this one condition," said he, imperiously, "that you exact from your seconds what I shall demand of mine: their word of honor this affair remains a secret."

"That is understood, monsieur," said Casal, and as if to prove to his interlocutor the sincerity of his promise, he called to Mosé, who was passing:

"*Voyons*, Alfred, do you remember the precise date they played that piece, *L'Acrobate*, I think, by Feuillet, in which the Bressant made such a hit? We were having a discussion about it, De Poyanne and I. He sticks out it was '72, and I say it was '73. Which was it?"

X.

BEFORE THE DUEL.

"I had not loved thee, dear, so well,
Loved I not honor more."
—*Lovelace.*

On the morning after the unrehearsed scene at the Théâtre Français that was destined so abruptly to turn poor Juliette's romance to melodrama, she was taking the air in the pretty garden of the Rue Matignon. Great clusters of sweet acacia filled the breeze with their delicious aroma, whose perfume the sad lady breathed half unconsciously. Her looks seemed to caress the familiar ivy, the leaves of mulberry and peach trees taking on a deeper green beneath the summer sun, and the fair display of red and white roses that gloried in the gardener's care. Since her last interview with Casal, Juliette had not felt herself; and it was to her distress on distress, and pain on pain, that she was not able to hide entirely from Poyanne the melancholy that oppressed her. How to deceive her lover's clairvoyance? He was so affectionate that the task seemed easy. But when love is sublimed to a certain intensity, it becomes as morbidly sensitive as jealousy itself. Poyanne began to suspect that Juliette no longer loved him for himself, but out of mercy. How can true love be imitated? It is not possible to stage the play of hearts. A woman's voice, who

truly loves, grows tenderer than her words, her eyes than both ; how is it possible to simulate these things ? She makes haste to show her sweetheart she is happy, so that he may be so. If love is wanting, all her efforts are but lost hypocrisy. By a dread divination, he will discern beneath the moving accent the effort to produce it, beneath the innocent caress the repugnance with which it was initiated. Can we contemn these ties that do but prove affection ? Have we any right to reproach another because they cannot feel as we do? But if we keep silence in this discontent, as Henry de Poyanne with Juliette, we fall as he did into that desponding state in face of which every word and every gesture of the other seems to cry : "Yes, you are pitied, but no longer loved." For the Count, the grief of this was doubled by another dark impression he tried in vain to supersede. A fresh conversation with D'Avançon had revealed to him that Casal had been definitively refused admittance to the Rue Matignon. The old diplomatist was not deceived.

"To be certain, I had only to note the look he gave me at the Petit Cercle," D'Avançon exclaimed, all the while "washing his hands with invisible soap in imperceptible water."

So Madame de Tillière had kept her promise. No longer did she receive Casal. Even without confirmation of the news, Henry was already sure of it. His encounter with Raymond at the outer door already proved it. But if, having made such short work of Raymond Casal, Juliette did not regret the action, why these suppressed signs of inner suffering, inexplicable unless she was concealing in her heart some strange compunction ? If it is bitter enough for a lover to sum up these danger-signals

even when he knows their cause, it is trebly trying to view the paling cheek, the tired eyelids, and the down-drawn lips, these flickerings in the flame of life that we adore, without knowing the hidden reason. How, then, if, besides all these torments, the lover has the added weight upon his mind: "Perhaps she is dying of love-melancholy for another!"

This is the master-form of jealousy, the only species of that passion known to noble souls. Its sphere with these lies not in actions, but in sentiments. It has for principle the thought that we no longer suffice for the happiness and welfare of the beloved one. It brings about no crisis of violent actions such as Casal was suffering just then. Yet slowly, inevitably, it saps the forces of the soul. This sort of jealousy wraps us in an unbreathable atmosphere, from which we emerge, if ever we do emerge, incapable of hope, insusceptible to joy, our very hearts outworn and withered. Not many days had passed between D'Avançon's denunciation of Casal and the hostile interview at the theatre, but that short time had sufficed to plunge De Poyanne into a state of far more profound depression than he had been in before his recent journey to Besançon. He was already forced to look this terrible supposition in the face:

"Juliette loves Casal, but she will not avow it; and if she holds to me, it is for very charity."

How quickly his lover's spirit was in arms at the detested word! Every morning he promised himself a final explanation with Juliette; each time he viewed her suffering face he recoiled at the idea of questioning her. He trembled lest such a conference should do her a fresh injury, and he held his peace. But the look of his eyes,

and the dejected havior of his visage, his very silences, betrayed his sadness and distrust ; and the unhappy widow, on her side, was able to interpret these signs of concealed anxiety from her knowledge of the Count's character :

"Henry is not even happy. I have plucked from my heart a love that was so infinitely dear—for what ? For nothing. And I have thrown the other back upon his wicked ways—for what ? For nothing. Woe is me ! "

In such moments Juliette comprehended, with a never-ending dread, the truth of the moral situation, that her renunciation of the love of a life for the satisfaction of a passionate pity had failed to heal her wounded heart—a heart that palpitated, bled at once for these two men ; though neither could she render happy the one, for whom she had almost crucified the other.

Madame de Tillière was at this stage on the highway to despair when Gabrielle came to load her with a last disaster : the news that Casal was upon the track of truth. The nervous seizure that resulted was so acute, her energies gave way. Juliette had borne up to the last against a series of emotional disappointments that were slowly eating up her strength, and when at length she gave way, science had no restorative. She passed forty-eight hours reclining on a couch, motionless as the dead, incapable of thinking, feeling. On the morning we see her feebly promenading the garden, she was yet so weak in consequence of this crisis it was with difficulty that she noted the quaint attractions of her favorite flowers, springing into full bloom in this fair May, and the chatter of the happy birds, ever repeating to herself such phrases as : "What will Casal think of me?" and, "What will he do ?"

What would he think?—as if she did not know full well! Since she could not show him the links that bound her to the past, he would certainly conclude she was the most cunning of coquettes, the falsest of flirts. In her semi-delirium, she went so far as to conceive the most dangerous projects, most foreign to her nature and her principles—to write and pour her heart's history out before him, to write and name a *rendezvous* for explanations.

"Would he believe me, if I told him all?" she cried. How he had found out what he knew already puzzled her indeed. For her now to try to justify her actions was to court the scorn of Raymond Casal. She felt a dire presentiment that she was on the eve of new and tragic struggles, while the almost summer sun continued to smile its blessing on the gentle garden, the acacia to breathe out its supersensitive aroma, the talkative, delighted birds to show themselves the only fit inhabitants of this abode of peace.

. . . . . .

There was a light footstep on the gravel pathway, but Juliette heard it not. It was Gabrielle de Candolle. Her look was clouded by some singular emotion. Beyond doubt, she was the bearer of some fresh bad news. She seemed to draw herself within herself as she began to speak. She called her friend twice by name, and Juliette looked up. Madame de Tillière was not for an instant mistaken in the expression of that well-known face.

"Oh, what is wrong?" Juliette demanded as soon as they were in the little salon. Gabrielle had affectionately drawn her in out of the sunshine.

"The matter is," said her visitor, in a tone almost stifled with emotion, "that there is something so very wrong

going on, I hardly know how to break it to you. Take my hand; see how I tremble. Are you strong enough to listen?"

"Oh, speak, speak!" exclaimed unhappy Juliette.

"It is I who am almost out of my wits. I am here to calm you, my sweet one. Sit down; how pale you are! . . . Judge for yourself whether I have not done right to come to you at once. We were at nine o'clock this morning, Louis and I, drinking our coffee, when a letter was brought in. 'It is from Monsieur Casal,' said the footman; 'the messenger awaits an answer.' 'From Casal?' said Louis. 'What can he have to say to me—a man that never writes?' He opened the envelope and began to read. I observed him closely. I saw he was astounded. He answered: 'Tell Monsieur Casal I will be at his house in half an hour.' When we were alone, I asked him 'What is the matter?' as you did just now. 'Nothing,' said Louis, 'that would be of interest to you. A presentation at the club.' He had the look on his face I know so well, that is always there when he is lying. I have suffered too much from him not to know it. I was on the point of writing you this morning to tell you. But it seemed such a silly thing. . . . When we met again at *déjeuner*, I saw at once that Louis still was much preoccupied. All at once he asked: 'Do you know does Henry de Poyanne often visit Madame de Tillière?' 'Yes,' said I; 'why do you ask?' 'Nothing; I only wished to know,' and he was once more silent. I have often told you he can keep nothing secret. 'He leaks,' as sister says. I let him sit still, certain that before breakfast was over he would drop some fresh phrase that would put me on to the secret. For there surely was a

secret, and it hinged upon that letter. The plan did not fail. 'And Casal,' he asked, awkwardly, 'does he often go to see Madame de Tillière since they dined together here in company?' 'I do not know,' I answered. 'But tell me why you are so eager to-day to be told who comes and goes in Juliette's society?' 'I?—the idea!' he said, and as he spoke the man came in and asked 'if monsieur could receive Lord Herbert Bohun?'—that Englishman, the *alter ego* of Casal, who for years has never so much as left his card at our door. . . . I left him and Louis closeted together in discussion, and took a cab, and here I am."

"It is very strange," cried Juliette—"exceedingly! If it should be about a duel! If your husband and the Englishman are Raymond's seconds against Henry. Oh! it is as clear as the day. They are going to fight. Do you not think so, Gabrielle? Oh, answer me!"

"Well, yes," said the Countess; "I thought it may be so. But do not excite yourself, I implore you. . . . We may be mistaken. . . . It is so very unlikely. Just think: Casal and Henry do not move in the same sphere. They do not belong to the same clubs, unless it is the Jockey Club, where Henry hardly ever goes; and we cannot think of them quarrelling there, or in any public place. There must have been an exchange of letters, if it is so. . . . It is hard to think it. . . . There is something going on, I think; I feel it. But what? We must find out. Through whom, I want to know? Louis has many faults; he is very imprudent, maladroit often, but if he has given his word to be silent, he will keep it. . . . I wish that you would see Poyanne. That is the reason why I came to you."

"I thank you," said Juliette, tenderly kissing her. "My good angel! A duel between those two! I should not survive it. We must find out. . . . Henry is due here at two o'clock. . . . He has not written to put off the appointment. Heavens! my head is burning. But you are in the right; I must keep up."

Spite of this resolution, and although this sudden danger had given her an air of outward calm, never in her life, since the day she had read the war telegram giving an account of the first battle her husband had fought in, had Juliette experienced such distracting and devouring anxiety as she did now. The few minutes that passed between Gabrielle's departure and the Count's arrival appeared so many ages. She regretted having allowed her friend to go, although Gabrielle had said, with great good sense:

"It will be better for Poyanne not to find me here. In these cases, the more people there are in the secret, the more a man's self-love comes into play. Write me, as soon as you know anything. I shall be on tenter-hooks until I hear."

"Ten minutes past two!" thought Juliette, following the minute hand. "If by a quarter past he is not here, it will mean that he is not coming. . . . How am I to find out? . . . A ring at the bell. The door is opening—the drawing-room door. Ah! it is he."

It was indeed Henry de Poyanne, who began by excusing himself for being late on account of press of business. In reality, he had just come away from his two seconds, his colleague De Sauve and General de Jardes. The meeting was fixed for the morrow; the arms and conditions, fixed by himself—conditions that would give the

boldest pause—double-barrelled pistols at twenty paces, at the word of command.

Henry de Poyanne did not conceal from himself that he was perhaps looking at his beloved one for the last time on earth. Nevertheless his face, which Juliette scanned with her heart in her eyes, did not betray the slightest sign of uneasiness. To show himself, on the eve of battle with a formidable foe, thus tranquil, did not oblige the Count to play a part. His quietude was not assumed. After the unexpected scene of the night before, Poyanne felt a strange calm come over him. Unable to imagine the real motive that had led Casal to fix this unmannerly quarrel upon him—the delirium of love's curiosity—he only saw in it the mania of jealousy, the jealousy of a man accustomed to success with women, resenting brutally the influence of the one for whom he thought himself expelled. What did this deep ill-temper betray, save that Raymond had no hope with Juliette? Then Juliette had never shown him any marks of tender interest? Though the Count had never doubted Juliette's fidelity, this irrefutable sign of it caused him to feel profoundly grateful.

But this Casal! He hated him so hotly, had hated him now for so many hours, furiously, that the prospect of having him at the mouth of his pistol so soon gave him, instinctively, a certain satisfaction. He ignored the fact that the chances of the fight were rather in favor of his adversary. At Gastinne's shooting-gallery, that very morning, whither he had gone to prove he had not altogether forgotten how to handle firearms, he had seen nailed to the wall, amongst the trophy-targets of shots beyond emulation, a card riddled with seven consecutive

bullets, and not a solid slip of pasteboard between the circumference of any of them. This card was marked, "Monsieur Raymond Casal, 2de Décembre, 1875."

What of it? Had he not faced death in '70? And this sense of instant danger, after such a long series of chagrins and disappointments, was not an altogether unpleasant sensation. Action, even tragic action, is a solace when we have fed too long upon our hearts.

It was thus that Juliette saw in De Poyanne only a mask of sombre serenity, that might have deceived her had not human life, and Henry's life, been at stake. To imagine nothing had gone wrong was not enough. She must find out for certain. There was one way by which she might ascertain whether the Count was to fight to-morrow. By asking him if he would pass the day with her she might make sure.

After a few minutes of every-day conversation on the weather and each other's health, she said to him, in a coquettish and wheedling way, of which her voice and face had almost lost the trick:

"I expect you now to show me how pleased you are with your dear friend. You are always reproaching me for not going out, for not taking the air. Well, mamma and I are going to-morrow to Fontainebleau, to see my Cousin de Nançay, who is staying there for a week or two. And whom do you think we have chosen for our cavalier?"

"D'Avançon?" said the Count, smiling.

"You are miles away," said she, playfully. "Our cavalier is yourself. Do not say no. We will have no excuses!"

"Unhappily, it is impossible," answered De Poyanne.

"I sit on a commission, at two o'clock, at the Palais Bourbon."

"You will throw over the commission," said Juliette; "that is all about it. You know I do not ask you much. But this time I demand compliance. I have my reasons for it," added she, mysteriously.

"You will allow," said Henry, to sustain the tone of jest in which the conversation was pitched, but examining her face to see if she had any suspicions, "that at least I have the right to know these reasons?"

"And on my side, I cannot tell you," answered Juliette, "but I will. . . . And if it should be only a sick woman's caprice, would you refuse to satisfy it? You know"—with a sad smile—"you ought to make a fuss of me; you may not have me always."

"Alas! no, indeed," said De Poyanne, seriously, "I may not. But, Juliette, be reasonable. If it is only your caprice, you would not have me sacrifice my duty and my conscience?"

Henry had risen to escape the insupportable insistance of Juliette's sapphire eyes, that seemed to search his soul. *Was she so ill?* If so, she was but giving way to one of those despotic fancies that reveal the want of nervous poise.

Or did she know all about the scene of the previous evening; and if so, at whose telling?

Juliette gave him little time to reflect on these nice points, for she rose in her turn, and walking straight toward him, with wide-open eyes, cried reproachfully:

"Ah, Henry, you had better tell the truth. No, you are *not* at liberty to-morrow. I know it, and I know the reason. I will tell it to you, and let us see if you dare

deny it. To-morrow you fight a duel—and I know with whom. Must I give his name?"

Active as Poyanne's doubts had been at the beginning of this interview, he was quite unable to conceal, as Juliette spoke, his astonishment. His very surprise was an avowal. And now a cruel idea was added to his former fears, of such sinister force that he found further concealment impossible. If Juliette knew all, as she said she did, it was not from the mouths of either of his seconds; of that he was positive. Consequently one of Casal's seconds must have blabbed; but this was hardly likely!

Or, *Casal himself had told her.*

"And why not? He wanted to get even with her," thought the Count; "perhaps even he threatened, beforehand, that he would fight this duel. . . . He wrote a letter telling her all about it? Miserable snob!" De Poyanne did not stop to reflect that this explanation was rather fantastic. He did not think that Juliette's ruse perhaps only emanated from a vague suspicion. The detestation he felt for his rival was so strong that the very thought of a new villany stung him into inappeasable fury, and he replied in tones of ice:

"Since you are so well posted, you know also the motives of this meeting, and that it is inevitable?"

"It is all too true, then?" cried Juliette, taking Henry in her arms. The sudden certainty that really these two men were about to fight to the death had struck such a panic to her soul she was no longer capable of argument; and she continued, trembling in every limb, but holding her lover convulsively to her breast:

"Oh! no! no! no! this duel must not, shall not go

on. You shall not fight him, Henry. . . . You and he, a duel? It must not be, I say!

"Oh! if you love me, find some means to stay this monstrous strife! You and he, one of you to kill the other! It is impossible, I tell you. Swear to me it shall not be! Do you hear? I will not have it, it would kill me. Oh! you two—*you two!*"

You two—you two! . . . The Count listened as she threw out these words, that revealed to him her fatal duality, a thing he had suspected many days, though she had successfully hidden it from him till the advent of one of those moments of supreme peril that unveil the hearts of strong and weak alike. She had seen these two, one and both so dear to her, in the same lightning flash of fear, locked in a wrestle which the grave alone could end. Her unhappy lover at this new evidence felt an upheaval of the moral jealousy from which he had already suffered so deeply. He disengaged himself from her tender embrace, and almost rudely pushed away her imploring arms, crying:

"*We two!—we two!* Look you, you hardly know whether it is for him or me you tremble! You hardly know which of us two you love. . . . Or, rather, you *do*," continued he, with a concentrated bitterness that caused Juliette to clasp her hand to her heart as though he had struck her. De Poyanne's accusation was indeed equivalent to a blow, for it was true. "You *do* know, and he knows too. *Now* I know why, seeing between you and him but one obstacle, the little remnant of affection you retained for *me*, he decided to sweep it away by sweeping me off the face of the earth. . . . But since he has told you, contrary to his word of honor, that we fight to-mor-

row, has he told you also that he allowed himself to call me 'coward'? 'Coward,' do you hear? And you ask me to swallow such an insult! And, while I am speaking, shall I tell you all? I will not allow such a mortal outrage to pass without taking this opportunity of staking my life against his, for I hate this man—I hate him, *how* I hate him!"

"Henry," said Juliette, taking his hand with the timidity of a child imploring pardon of its mother, "I implore you, believe me in this! I swear to you, by all my past and yours, by all our future, that I have gathered nothing of all this save from Gabrielle and from yourself. . . . She was here just now. Her husband is one of the seconds in this horrible affair. He let slip a word or two that aroused her suspicions, and then mine, when she repeated them. Then, when I heard the avowal from your own lips, I saw blood—the spilling of blood for *my* sake! And I cried aloud. . . . But I love you, I love you only. I am yours for life. . . . Oh! Henry, we shall be so happy. You were so good to me, so kind! Understand this, admitting that this man loves me, if he has fixed a quarrel on you, it is because he knows I love you, that I shall love you forever!"

"Not the less has he insulted me!" interrupted the Count; "and I can do or say nothing that will wipe out *that*. I can no more draw back *now* than if we were on the ground, and the command had been given to 'fire!' . . . I believe you," added he, more gently, answering Juliette's pressure with a long and tender hand-clasp. He had once more experienced her sincerity of feeling toward him, at the same time that he suffered so deeply. He dared not tell her all his thoughts. "If I was sure that

you do not love him! But no; you love him, but you have no mind to do so; you love him, yet you hardly dare to love; while as for me, you wish to love me, but you cannot."

Henry de Poyanne began to be heart-sick of this eternal uncertainty; and felt, too, the absolute necessity of preserving his presence of mind to set his affairs in order that very afternoon, possibly his last in the world. "Yes," he insisted, "I believe you fully. And I feel that I have been unwise, unkind, to speak to you as I have done. . . . Now you know all. I cannot take back what I have said. But be of good courage, my own sweet friend, and speak no more upon this subject. . . . There is no paltering, you know that well, with affairs of honor. . . . And now I must really leave you. I came here to ask you to receive me at nine o'clock this evening. I will say *Au revoir*, if it is God's will. And we will talk to each other—you will have thought of much—without a word of all those things that hurt us both so much, so uselessly. We are not any too happy, we two, Juliette!"

She let him go without another word. What could she do in face of the evidence of this social necessity that weighs on the world as implacably and oppressively as a physical necessity—this recognized cataclysm of society that is as fatal as the falling factory or unexpected earthquake? Raymond had insulted Henry, grossly. The last was speaking by the card. So they must fight. There was no help for it! But apparent necessity does not presuppose resignation, and the heart of this woman, thus doubly burdened with fear, revolted against the acceptance of the torture this duel represented.

Poyanne had been gone some time, and still Juliette sat in the same despondent attitude as when the door closed. Her mind was crowded with detestable images of the combatants on the so-called field of honor; she saw the grouped seconds, the awful doctor with his case of instruments, the still more awful glittering pistols—had not her lover mentioned pistols?—and then *one* of those two stark upon the turf. . . . She saw Poyanne thus fallen: the eyes of this true friend of years, in which she could never bear to see the shadow of pain and sorrow, turned slowly, terribly, deathfully, toward her, and in them this supreme agony dumbly expressed, more torturous than dying Cæsar's whisper:

"*It is thou that hast slain me.*"

She chased the nightmare with all her strength from her soul; but another image interposed:

Casal shot to death—Casal, whose presence had ever afflicted her with joy or terror, whose absence had ever caused her a surpassing melancholy. His noble, manly visage, whose beauty had so fatally attracted her, now corpse-white; his eyes strained at her, not with tenderest reproach, but with the intolerable expression of utter scorn, the fear of which had haunted her for days and days. And—but how account for the possibility of this atrocious ambiguity of feeling?—even at that moment of supernal agony, Juliette knew not which of those twain she would bewail with bitterer tears, if the duel ended in a death—a murder!

But no, it should *not* take place! If she had to throw herself at the principals' feet on the field, she would be there. . . . Insensate idea! Neither the hour nor the place, nor anything connected with the duel was known

to her. In twenty-four hours, in less, the last act of the drama brought about by her culpable weakness would be over. She had been able to take the measure of her impotence in the matter, when Poyanne had so haughtily spoken to her of the impossibility of interfering with the course of affairs of honor, and she had found no word of interruption. What to do now? Oh, heaven! what step to take? . . . Address herself to the seconds? It was their bounden duty to hurry on the battle. But who were they? She knew the names of De Candolle and of Lord Herbert. What could she say to them? In whose name supplicate the friends of the man she had deceived, deceived by act, if not by word of mouth? For in their eyes, if they had received the merest outline of the case from Casal, she was a coquette, an infamous, perfidious jilt, who had allowed herself to be courted in her lover's absence by a person to whom she proposed to show the door as soon as he returned. How explain to them her good faith, her involuntary concessions, but, above all, this abominable anomaly of a double heart which caused her to tremble equally for the safety of both? And then the nightmare took possession once more. She saw a horrid scarlet blotch upon a cambric shirt, a spurt of red, red blood, and with the blood, whether Henry's or Raymond's, her life flowed out in anguish. The sensation was so awful as to make Juliette long for a painless death rather than her mortal eyes should see the hideous sight.

. . . . . .

The clock struck the hour. Mechanically Juliette lifted her head. The silver bell sounded unnaturally loud through the silence. Minute by minute, second by second, the precious time was escaping, escaping—the

time to act, the time that might enable her to prevent the nightmare coming true. It had struck four—over an hour since De Poyanne had closed the door behind him. And she had done nothing as yet but think and think. All the time Gabrielle was waiting for her, ready to second her in the work of reconciliation.

The idea that she had carelessly thrown away so many precious moments caused Juliette to rise abruptly. In a twinkling she rang for her maid, donned a street costume, and sent for a *fiacre*. Soon she was rolling toward the Rue Tilsitt as fast as the coachman would drive. Twenty projects flashed through her mind, in all of which the Countess had a part to play. A very simple accident frustrated one and all. Not seeing anything of her friend, and being almost beside herself with impatience, Madame de Candolle had driven away to the Rue Matignon. No doubt their respective carriages passed each other on the way, for the porter dwelt on the short time his mistress had been away.

"If only," thought Juliette, reseating herself in the carriage—"if only she has had the good sense to wait for me at home!"

It would have been, no doubt, the Countess's safest way. But in these emergencies it is always the obvious things that we do not dream of doing. Instead of saying to herself, "Juliette is evidently gone to the Rue Tilsitt, and will come back here when she fails to find me," Madame de Candolle, dveoured with anxiety, thought of nothing save to push on to the Rue Royale, resolute, if her husband was at the club, to call him out and find out something from him. Whilst she was on this bootless errand, seeing the hour, and the habits of her husband, Juli-

ette arrived at her own house once more. She learned that her friend had been there, but had gone away without leaving any message. In face of this fresh misunderstanding, she was seized with the idea of returning to the Rue Tilsitt, where, naturally, she did not find the one she was in search of. Then, in the disturbed frame of mind these counter-journeys had induced, a new and different idea began to grow and grow, until it seemed impossible to refuse this unique chance of chances to prevent the duel.

The battle was between Poyanne and Casal. What was the cause of it? An insult by Casal—the word "*Coward!*" hurled at his enemy. . . . If she could get him to retract it, if he would but apologize for the insult, the duel would become impossible. Could any one obtain this grace from him? Who but herself? Why not? If she went to him now, immediately, showed him her grief, her agony, implored him to let the fight go by default, would he not yield? What honor prevented De Poyanne from doing, he could perform—and would, if he loved her. And if he had not loved her, he would never have gone to such extremities. Yes, here was safety—only here. Why had she not thought of it long ago?

Forty minutes more lost already. Her carriage was half way between the two houses when she arrived at this revolutionary conclusion. But little time to act—at seven, dinner with her mother; at nine she was to meet Henry again. As if in a dream, she beat her knuckles on the pane, and called out Raymond Casal's private address. As if in a dream, she descended at the door of the old family mansion in the Rue Lisbonne, rang, asked for Monsieur Casal, and was admitted. The enormity of

her action only appeared to her when she was seated in the grand salon awaiting Raymond's approach. The clock struck FIVE.

"*Mon Dieu!*" she cried aloud, "what have I done?" Already too late to withdraw. Raymond entered. He had been in the library, occupied, as was no doubt Poyanne, in settling his worldly affairs, as men do who are to fight for their lives on the morrow, when the valet announced the visit of a lady, name refused. He imagined that perhaps some indiscretion of De Candolle had revealed all to the Countess, and that Gabrielle had called to try and get him to allow her husband to arrange the affair. When he recognized Juliette, his astonishment was so profound that he remained for many seconds motionless on the threshold. To see her now, so pale, so shaken with an emotion she could not conceal, he guessed at a glance that she knew everything. Through whom, if not through De Poyanne? By instinct he reasoned in the same way as his adversary had already done. In face of this new proof of an understanding between these two, he, also, felt an access of jealous fury. But he brought to bear on Juliette the violence of a man whose mind has been long over-fraught with dark suspicion, and whose whole thought is to bruise and break the spirit of the woman who has been the cause.

"You here, madame? Ah! I can guess the reason. You wish to ask of me your lover's life?"

"No," replied Juliette, in a broken voice. Casal's speech had wounded her to the quick, but since this mad adventure was afoot, at least she would try so to act that her effort might not be vain. "No! it is not *his* life I come to ask of you; it is my *own*. I come to ask of

you not to add to the distress I have been suffering for weeks, the agony of seeing two brave men risk death through my ill-doing. . . . You, only, can undo that which you have accomplished ; and that is why I wished to see you, to talk to you, to implore you, if needs be, to spare me, me—I, that can bear no more ; I, who will not survive if anything should happen."

Juliette spoke without measuring her words. She only saw before her the necessity of touching Casal's feelings if the duel was to be stopped. She did not reflect that her words, in this man's eyes, were equivalent to the most precise avowal.

"It was not *his* life, 'her lover's life,'" she came to ask! . . .

The phrase burnt into Casal's haughty spirit like a red-hot branding-iron. He took two steps toward her, and then stood with folded arms, a vision of terror.

"So! You avow he *is* your lover. And I *would not* believe it, fool that I surely was. Have you duped me yet sufficiently to please your dainty taste? Have I played the puling school-boy long enough to tickle your sense of the ridiculous? Have you laughed your soulful at the namby-pamby fellow who came to you to beg the love that you were lavishing upon another all the while? While as for me, I loved you as I never loved before. So deferential was I that I did not even dare to speak my mind! . . . I must admit you know your business very well ; the niceties of coquetry, too, become your style. But you have yet to learn that it is dangerous to tamper with a man of spirit. I will kill this lover of yours for you, madame ; I will kill him for you as sure as you have lied to me for two whole months, day by day, hour by

hour. . . . I comprehend it has entertained you in your trade of pretty creature to have been able to boast: 'The poor young man is most unhappy, truly; but what has he to complain of? I never conceded anything to him; I made no promises. He loved me; is that *my* fault?' . . . Yes, it *is* your fault, madame; and since I can only reach you through this De Poyanne of yours, who had told you, against his word of honor, the secret of this meeting, no doubt to save his life, it is through him that I will strike you! Counsel him not to miss the appointment. As for me, I shall be there. And now, adieu forever, madame. There is no need of words between us any more."

An infinitely cruel speech, in terrible contrast with every individual word this man had spoken to Juliette de Tillière since the day, so long ago, when they had sat side by side at the De Candolles', under the gleaming wax lights, in the perfume of the roses and violets, with the white lilac and mauve-purple orchids in front of them, afraid to look each other in the eyes for fear of betraying that not quite impossibility, even in the nineteenth century, Love at First Sight! . . .

An infinitely cruel speech!

For the first time Juliette used the Christian name of the man who thus attacked her, and made answer, in the plenitude of her woe:

"No, Raymond; I cannot bear that you should speak to me, condemn me thus. Ah! how is it no voice has pleaded for me in your heart? How is it you do not do me the justice of thinking that perhaps you never have known *all?* You who know what life is, how is it you never thought of admitting, when you began to suspect

me : 'This woman is the victim of a fatality I am ignorant of ; but she is not a flirt. She has been, is sincere with me. I have interested her, she has loved me.' . . .

"Yes, Raymond, I have loved you, and I love you yet. If that had not been so, do you think that the thought of this encounter between you two would have overthrown me so as to have brought me here—I, Juliette de Tillière? . . . Yes, it is true when you entered into my life I was not free. I ought not to have received you as I did. . . . I thought myself strong ; I was weak. I saw not whither I was going. All worked so rapidly, so fatally. . . . But, on the other side, did I know how much I was loved? I learnt everything so suddenly—all that I felt for you, and all the suffering I caused a noble heart. Ah! you will never understand, you, a man, that a true woman cannot cross to happiness with one man over the heart's grave of another. But it is all too true. I could not do it. When I felt the agony of one near me who had not changed, the reflex of his pain, I weakened ; I could only think of healing so much suffering, or of preventing it. . . . I do not lie to you. Oh! do not doubt the truth. I am showing you the all in all of my heart's misery. To-day these things are so. Look at me ; see what this effort, this tearing of my soul in twain to separate from you, is costing me. Think of my martyrdom, and answer, have I no right to say, Add not another pang! Oh! leave me not to think that I am your assassin—*yours or his!* No one suffers as I suffer. It is too hard. It is, indeed, too hard!"

. . . . . .

How beautiful was Juliette whilst thus recounting the strange inner drama of which, as she said, she was the

chief, the fated victim, with the weird beauty of a woman who trails her pride in the dust for love! Who could be adamant to this appeal? Her only fault had been to feel too deeply, and to love too tenderly—if to do so is wrong. In spite of himself, Casal abandoned himself to the utter charm of this unique confession. How could he escape the arch-mesmeric power of such sincerity? His jealousy and passion fled at sight of that which she had so justly called the all in all of her heart's misery. He now saw her as she really was, illogical, yet so noble, a prey to incongruous affections, and so bitterly punished. How? By being able neither to renounce one nor accept the other! Shame seized him at thought of his recent savage cruelty.

He, too, could not bear to see such suffering, and not endeavor to console it. It was with a faltering voice and with tears in his eyes that he spoke, and oh! the change of tone was bliss itself to Juliette:

"Why did you not speak to me thus long ago? When I came to see you, after what Gabrielle told me, had you but told me then! I should have understood, I could have pardoned all. But now—oh! it is all too late!" . . .

And then, after a long pause:

"You ask that I should settle this affair. Alas! nothing any longer depends on me. Make an apology upon the ground? Not that, not that: it is impossible."

"'Impossible!'" cried Juliette, wringing her hands. "And you say you love me! It is your pride that speaks, Raymond, and not your heart. . . . I implore you, if ever I have been sweet and lovable in your eyes, if you think now anew of me, if you have really forgiven me, if you love me, listen to me, and do what I ask!"

She continued pressing her advantage, besieging him with her prayers, her looks, her tears, her very self, breathing her will over him through that suggestion of extremity of wishfulness before which resistance the most freezing quails and yields, till he said in the tone of a man who throws away his pride for good:

"You wish it: well! I can do something still—it is useless to ask me to do more—I can write De Poyanne a letter, expressing my regrets that I spoke as I did to a man of his acknowledged courage. . . . I promise I will word this letter in such form that it will be admissible for him to rest contented. But if not, if he exacts satisfaction still by force of arms—even after that—I owe it to him, and he shall have it."

"And this letter," said Juliette, panting, "when will you write? Immediately?"

"It shall be so, immediately," said Casal. "You have my word."

"Oh!" exclaimed Juliette, "how I thank you, how I thank you! How much you love me!"

It was *her* business, next, to decide Poyanne, and once the letter was written, she did not, could not doubt that she would fail to overcome his rancor. By her presence and speech alone she had vanquished the jealousy, the pride, the passion of a man so bitter, of a man who, at the first onset, had been so utterly devoid of mercy. In the overflow of gratitude that swept her off her feet, in the reaction from the exertion of will-power that had procured her this answer to her prayers, tears came into Juliette's eyes, her limbs began to fail her. She yet held Casal's hands, as she had taken them when pouring out her heartfelt thanks. He upheld her on his arm, and she did

not repulse him. Once more he beheld that pale face on his shoulder, now with a little smile shining through her melancholy. The tortured soul was at rest for a moment, the palpitating heart at peace. Half in reverence, all in love, Casal bent his head, and for the first and the last time on earth the lips of those two, who loved each other with a passion that was akin to the affection of the angels, met, and Juliette for the first and for the last time in all her life was happy, till, with a start—the clock had scarce ticked thrice—she bethought her where she was, with whom—and fled.

XI.

THE LAST OF THE LABYRINTH.

"God hath given you one face, and you make yourselves another. . . . Get thee to a nunnery—go!"—*Hamlet.*

DISREGARDFUL of ceremony, Juliette quitted Raymond without further adieu, and directed the coachman to drive to the corner of the Rue du Faubourg St. Honoré; for she felt unable to proceed directly home, and it wanted yet an hour to dinner-time. Her mind was still a whirlpool of emotion. She did not for a moment doubt that the letter of apology would be sent to De Poyanne; but when he received it, what would he think of the conduct of Casal, and how account for such an unexpected falling off, unless knowing, as he did, her influence over Raymond, he at once suspected Juliette of having been the instrument of mediation? She had not foreseen all this; her sole anxiety had been to prevent the duel.

But even if it was prevented, what next, and next? She had just given Casal a final proof that he had her heart entirely in his keeping, yet her spirit none the less remained Henry's. The kiss that she had shared with Raymond, then, was but an empty compact, the last lock on the mausoleum of their love? It was intended to mean everything; but, being analyzed, only seemed the

seal of their unhappiness. It was something more than a gage, something less than a pledge. Confronted, it formed but another proof to the tortured Juliette that she was not as other women in society appeared to be, the mistress of their inclinations. A very mist of misery blotted the future from her outlook. Yes; even if this duel was not fought, the consequences of her previous actions would remain. Her visit to Casal might prove instrumental in saving the lives of either of these two men, but what would it amount to in the end? The fatal tangle of her feelings remained to be untwisted. Nay, the immediate consequences pointed to fresh complications; the tangle had become even more hopelessly knotted. These men would bear a still sterner animosity against each other now that they had been separated by the frail strength of a woman; and as for herself, she was more powerless than before to decide between their warring claims to the supremacy in her affections. Traits of passion were about to come into play which her sympathetic nature could only view with horror. It was no longer possible to delude herself about the nature of her love for Raymond, and after the new sign of it that she had given, he would assuredly resume the quest with renewed ardor; he would seek fresh opportunities of meeting her, would besiege her with letters, would make her life a burden to herself, her society a barren boredom to her friends. For Juliette had no more thought of yielding to Casal's importunity now than before the threat of battle. Yet it was clear that she could not conceal long from De Poyanne the fact that she had prompted the letter of apology. And she could guess the fatal train of consequences; whichever way she looked, nothing but deep discomfort seemed her portion.

Her carriage stopped at the perfumery store named; the very coachman's genial grin seemed to mock her. The bright slant sun of evening dazzled her eyes, as her own thoughts dazzled her soul. . . . No; after all, she would not get out; she did not feel strong enough to play at making purchases. Juliette directed the man to drive up the Champs Elysées, and threw herself back in despair on the musty cushions of the hired vehicle.

Had ever a more miserable mortal than herself been driven in that carriage? The aimlessness of the present journeying was but symbolic of her life. Wretched women ere now had been known to fling their wrongs and horrors at nightfall into the silent Seine. It would be dark enough in half an hour. Involuntarily Juliette began to long for a quick and painless end to life. In imagination she saw the chrysoprase stream, mirroring the lamp-glimmer, flowing on and on to Notre Dame, to the great sea, peaceful, profound. Death-darkness seemed an enviable eventide. This little life—it could but have been granted her, she thought, to tantalize! Good Catholic though she was, the sweet offices of the church did not now appear to hold out the faintest hope of consolation. For the first time in her existence she, the energetic lady of the Rue Matignon, the centre of a cultured and admiring circle, felt as the fainting tatterdemalion of the streets may be supposed to feel in his most dismal hour, or the yet more lonely and despairing one of the sad sisterhood of social lepers.

The weary widow in fancy beheld herself carried to the Rue Matignon, a pitiful *thing* instead of a breathing woman. Not for her own sake, but for her mother's, she recoiled. The vision of such a home-coming rendered

Madame de Nançay so luridly present that Juliette cried aloud :

"Dear, *dear* mamma, she loves me so! I *must* have courage!"

She made up her mind, now, to go back very bravely. It was late, but she could say she had been taken ill. Her lassitude of eye and gesture would substantiate this fresh excuse. Excuses! She was sick of lying.

Her mother was exceedingly alarmed at her appearance.

"I almost fainted in a shop, mamma. I would not let them tell you, so as not to frighten you. You have suffered enough!"

"You will see a doctor at once," exclaimed Madame de Nançay. "Poor child, how your face is altered, and even in your need you spared me! How good you are!"

She embraced her daughter tenderly, little knowing that her very kindness made Juliette feel but more discomfited.

"I am better now," she said. "Oh! let me sleep. It will be time to see a doctor in the morning."

"Lie down, my angel," said Madame de Nançay, as though to a child.

"But Gabrielle is coming."

"I will receive her, and will tell her all."

"And Monsieur de Poyanne."

"You shall not be disturbed."

"My love to him, mamma; and say he is to come for us, without fail, to-morrow morning, to go to Fontainebleau."

"Sleep, sleep, my only babe!" Juliette had half walked, half been carried to the pretty bedroom furnished with her girlhood's belongings, and now lay on the nar-

row rosewood couch with its ivory rails almost as white as ivory herself. Madame de Nançay gently fanned her, singing the plaintive notes of a half-forgotten cradle song, till Juliette, exhausted by many dread nights of insomnia, sank into the undisturbed slumber of a tired child.

. . . . . .

Toward daylight Juliette dreamt that she was walking down a great, cool, dim cathedral aisle, in bridal array, to meet her future husband. She did not know who the groom was, but at the altar, looking up, beheld Raymond Casal, clothed in funeral black, ready for the ceremony. The service was conducted according to the rites of the English Church, which she had often visited from curiosity. When the question was propounded about "any just cause or impediment," there was a stir in the vast audience that had gathered, and out of the throng walked a tall man, clad in the garb of a captain of the Imperial Guard, a long sabre with a gilt scabbard clanking on the tessellated pavement. He came forward, without a word on his lips, and stood at the altar, at the right hand of Raymond Casal. It was her husband, the Count Gustave de Tillière, slain in the year '70.

Juliette woke with a dreadful scream that roused the house. The servants came rushing in—last of all, Madame de Nançay, to whom her daughter merely related the fact that she had had a fearful nightmare. Her mother would not leave her any more, but sat and held her hand till broad daylight. The glad June morning sunshine revealed Juliette looking years older than the evening, not yet three months back, she had waited so lovingly on Madame de Nançay before the hunting dinner in the Rue de Tilsitt.

As soon as Juliette had managed to swallow a cup of coffee and a few sweet biscuits they brought her in her letters. Yes, Gabrielle had called, and left no further message than that she would be with her in the forenoon.

Henry de Poyanne? No; he had not come again, or sent his valet either. Madame de Nançay opined that he had no doubt been detained by political engagements.

Juliette clutched an unopened envelope with the monogram =(R.= in gold stamped on it. She knew it must be from Raymond Casal. Turning her head away, she found courage, in the midst of her alarms, to break the seal.

The non-arrival of De Poyanne could only signify that he had backed out of his intention of spending the evening with Juliette. If that was the case, the letter of apology had proved unavailing, and by this time the dreadful duel had been fought, and one or other of them possibly even now was groaning out his precious life-blood on the sward.

As Juliette unfolded Casal's note, the image of her dead husband seemed, in her agony, to be looking over her shoulder. The letter ran as follows:

"PARIS, *Friday Night.*

"I kept my word, my charming friend, and wrote to M. de P. . . . This letter, which has cost me so much, will be but another token to you how anxiously I long to please you.

"If, as I hope, things are arranged, I shall call upon you at two o'clock in order to tell you all about it by word of mouth.

"I am, your

"RAYMOND."

A copy of the letter to the Count was appended:

"MONSIEUR: On the eve of a meeting similar to the one appointed for to-morrow, the step I now hazard would run the risk of being interpreted very strangely had I not already, as you yourself have, proved my courage to the world, and were I not to add that you are absolutely at liberty to take no notice of this letter, if so it pleases you to do. In that case, let all remain as though I had not written it. But, in any case, I shall have done a duty to my conscience.

"Let me now say that men of your character and talent are too few and far between in our country, and their lives too precious, for it to be the slightest stain upon my honor to tell you that I regret my ill-considered speeches of last night. I repeat, monsieur, that in writing thus to you I am acting from a conscientious scruple; thus, if you judge this satisfaction insufficient, I am entirely at your disposal, as has been arranged. Which way soever your decision runs, accept in this a proof of my particular esteem.

"RAYMOND CASAL."

. . . . . .

"But Henry could not have turned a deaf ear to excuses thus presented!" thought Juliette, with renewed hope that the duel had been frustrated, reading once more the two letters side by side on the same sheet of paper. The coincidence seemed a little indelicate. Juliette could have wished that Raymond's note to her had not been quite so closely linked with these souvenirs of his rival. It was only a coincidence, but women are alive to such things. And she recognized a hardly concealed sense of self-satisfaction in the letter to herself. The idea was wormwood to her gentle spirit. It was she herself who had been unable to act up to her deliberate policy; could she then blame Casal for seeking to reëstablish himself not only on the former friendly footing, but for endeavoring to push his courtship to an issue? Where was a fresh excuse to come from, now that, alas! her lies had been admitted by her own confession?

Henceforward, if he lived—what horror in the thought !—he would only smile when he heard any new excuse from her lips. What shame and sorrow to have forfeited that natural endowment of man or woman, the simple right to be believed ! . . .

"What matter all my sufferings if they are saved ?"

This hope grew rather than failed as the sun rose higher. It was impossible for her to send a messenger to De Poyanne's apartments under any pretext before ten o'clock. She wished to make sure that the Count had not gone out. As soon as she learned that, on the contrary, he had quitted his rooms very early in the morning, without leaving any word as to when he would return, her hopes fell to the ground like autumn leaves before a hurricane. Vainly she repeated :

"I am frightening myself for nothing. In any case he would be bound to see his seconds." But these excuses served to while away the time. Her mother left her now, to attend to some domestic matter. What should she do next ? Send to the Rue Lisbonne ? She thought a long while of so doing, and mentally sketched the beginnings of half a dozen letters. Madame de Tillière was making ready to write to Gabrielle, when the door opened and the Countess entered. The excited expression of her eyes left no further room for doubt in Juliette's mind.

"The duel has been fought ?" she cried.

"At last I find you," said Gabrielle, not answering the question directly, "and, I suppose, you passed your afternoon trying to convince Poyanne. When I heard of the state of mind you were in, I guessed that you had failed.

"Yes ; they have doubtless fought. I am quite sure of

it. Last night I saw on the table the case of duelling-pistols they brought secretly into the house; and this morning, when Louis went out, I looked, and the case was no longer there. . . . I heard from the *concierge* that he gave Casal's address to the coachman. . . . I awaited his rearrival, hoping to learn the result, one way or the other, the livelong morning. As he was not home by eleven, I could bear the suspense no longer, and so came on to you."

"But you—do you know nothing? Speak, what is the news?"

"I know now that Raymond insulted Henry," said Madame de Tillière; "that was the cause of the quarrel."

"My God! to think that at this instant one of them is perhaps lying dead, and I the cause of it!

"Let us go, Gabrielle; come with me. Let us go. There may yet be time. Your gatekeeper has told you where your husband went. Let us now hasten, and get similar information at Casal's."

"You talk like a child!" responded Gabrielle. "Even if we got at their destination and went thither, we should be too late. I will not be a party to such a silly step, and one that would harm your reputation. We owe *something* to our names. Hold up your head a little higher, my sweet one!"

"As if my name and pride were in question!" cried Juliette. "The question is, I will not sit and see them murder each other. I will *not!*"

"Be quiet, love," said the Countess; "some one is knocking at the door."

The footman entered.

His simple phrase had a meaning for these two women

that held them spell-bound with the same thought of terror:

"M. le Comte de Poyanne waits, and wishes to know if madame is able to receive him?"

"Tell him to come in," said Juliette, hardly able to speak. "Go into my bedroom, Gabrielle! I shall want you presently, perhaps. I feel that I shall faint. Go, go, my own!"

Hardly, in fact, could poor Juliette stand.

If there had been a duel, Henry, at any rate, was safe and sound.

But Raymond?

And there *had* been a duel.

She saw it in the first eyeblink of De Poyanne. He was very pale, and dressed in a black frock coat. She flew to him, unmindful of what he would think of her behavior.

"*Well?*" cried she, in a voice but little louder than a whisper.

"*Well?*" responded the Count, almost imitating her. "We fought. . . . I am here. But," added he, gravely, "my hand, *unfortunately*. . . ." And he paused, mysteriously holding out his right hand.

"He is wounded?" demanded Juliette, agonizingly. "He is——"

She dared not finish the sentence. The Count had opened his lips as though to answer "*Yes!*" to the question she had failed to formulate. Juliette gave a little scream. Her lips, this time, managed to frame the fatal words:

"Dead—he is dead!"

She fell into a chair as though annihilated. She drooped her head between her palms, and such convulsive sobs

rent her breast that it seemed her frail spirit must soon pass away with the mortal terror of such throes.

De Poyanne drew himself to his full height, and watched her. An expression of profound sorrow ruled his noble countenance. He approached her, and, touching her shoulder with his hand, said quietly:

"Deny that you love him *now!*"

The Count spoke in that frozen tone of voice that was always so terrible to Juliette, but it is very doubtful if she even heard him.

"Weep not, Juliette," said De Poyanne, rousing her from her tragic woe. "Weep no longer. And pardon me for having had to put you through this ordeal in order to be quite sure of your true sentiments—*quite* sure!

"No; he is not dead. He is wounded, but not dangerously, with a ball in the arm, which the surgeon has doubtless extracted long ere this.

"He will live.

"But what matters it, now, *to me*, whether this man lives or whether he dies? Alive or dead, you love him; and you love me no longer.

"I wished to know, and whether he was so deeply dear to you or not.

"I lied to you, Juliette, for the first time, and the last time, in our lives.

"And now I am rewarded. Ah! harshly, harshly, since I see you thus bewail him.

"Yes, it is hard for me to bear, but not so bitter as the doubt of these last days.

"Do not answer me. I am not your accuser. I have nothing with which to reproach you. You yourself, I think, hardly knew how much you loved him.

"But now you know. And I know, too"

A silence fell on these two lovers.

The first feeling of despair with which Juliette had greeted the news of Casal's death changed into a sort of stupor as De Poyanne spoke. Reassured as to the results of the duel she had so dreaded, Henry had now, at last, bound her, and, so to speak, nailed her restless limbs to the cold, inexorable cross of truth. For the first time for months the situation between them was defined and circumscribed, and Juliette convicted of this love for Casal that she had so combated. Even if she had not just given this proof of it by being so overcome by the supposed death, she had no longer the strength to struggle or deny the simple facts. This horror of her double hearthad had its day, and must give place to something else, no matter what.

Juliette waited; she was sitting with her hands crossed on her knees, her eyes cast down, as some guilty one who is prepared to hearken to a righteous sentence.

At last she resumed the sad conversation in the voice of a suppliant:

"It is true. I have struggled for many days against a trouble that I cannot overcome. It is true. You have the right to condemn me, because I did everything in my power to conceal this struggle from your eyes. But it is also true"—and her voice took on a firmer tone—"it is also true that never, *never*, do you hear? have you ceased to be dear to me, so dear that I could never bear to see you suffer for an instant without feeling an irresistible desire to comfort you. *Never* have I contemplated my own happiness at the cost of yours. Nor was it ever anything but true when I told

you I needed your love as one needs air. . . . Call it by what name you will, this feeling of affection for you, which made it impossible for me to accept my freedom when you offered it; but never forget that it was real, sincere, and that I obeyed it without other thought. Realize this, at least, Henry. Do not imagine that I have been playing with you; for it is not, and it never has been so."

"No," said the Count, interrupting her. "You have been afraid to see me suffer. Let us look the situation in the face. . . . I know it all, I comprehend it all, and still I live. I am not young enough to be unable to renounce happiness. But, at my age, one is hungry and thirsty for the truth, and, once more, it is the truth, Juliette, that you no longer love me, that you love another. If I hankered for a decisive and irrefutable proof of this, it was to have the right to tell you, without reproach or jealousy: 'You are free. Make what use of your liberty best pleases you.'

"Everything, anything is preferable to the moral imbecility that so long prevented you from seeing your heart in the mirror of fact; anything is better than this pity that sits so ill upon you, than these oscillations between opposite emotions that have led you, whither?—to offer me, whom you know, for whose love you have so much regard, a mortal insult!"

"'A mortal insult!'" repeated Juliette. What did he mean by that? Casal again? "Explain yourself?"

"Read this letter," answered De Poyanne, handing her the duplicate in Raymond's writing, of the letter she had read that very morning. "And answer me, answer me truly. I can bear everything, and you owe it me to tell

me all. 'Yes' or 'no,' was it you who instigated Casal to pen me these excuses? For of himself, I know, he never would have written thus."

"It was I," said Juliette, with an effort. "Oh! pardon me, Henry. I was beside myself. You had repulsed me so harshly. I had only that one hope, that feeble hope, of preventing the duel."

"And you failed to reflect that if I had accepted these excuses, this man would have thought that I was afraid to fight him, and that I had set *you* on to make overtures?"

"No, Henry," cried Juliette; "I swear to you it never struck me for a moment. He knows you are so brave; and then, he had only to look at me," she added, pitifully, "to see I was no longer in my wits. For, truly, I was crazy with despair."

"Ah?" said the Count. "You *saw* him yesterday?"

"Yes," said Juliette, with a still greater effort.

"Here?" said De Poyanne, to whom this question was visibly difficult to utter.

"No," answered she, with the resolution of one who has had enough of hypocrisy.

"At his house?"

"At his house."

They looked at each other. The old expression of pain, now much intensified, passed over De Poyanne's features, that had so often betrayed her into a pity that paralyzed her will, and made her what she was.

"Do not misjudge me!" she cried.

"I have no right to cross-examine you," said De Poyanne. "I am your friend, and ever will remain so. But now I am too full of trouble to say much. To-morrow,

if you will allow me, I will come to talk to you, to bid you a long farewell." . . .

Juliette started.

"At two o'clock. We shall be calmer, both. Adieu! Farewell, my only love!"

"Farewell, Henry!"

Juliette was too oppressed with an indefinable sense of the horror of her life, concentrated now into this interview of half an hour, to be able to say more.

This man was nobility itself in the midst of his jealousy. Oh! to have been the wife of such a man!

Heavens! but Juliette was doomed many a thousand times to see Count Henry de Poyanne's expression and bearing as he kissed her hand.

It was the last time that she ever saw him.

. . . . . .

When Gabrielle, a quarter of an hour later, stole into the room on tiptoe, she found her friend motionless, almost pulseless, on the sofa, her eyes wide open, her arms listless on the pillows.

Time and grief were synonyms for Juliette henceforward. Her betrothed had thrown her over. He was gone. She joyed no longer in the memory of the other. What was he to her—compared with Henry? Did he say adieu, farewell? that he would live? that truth was truth, and love was love? Then what was her affection, if not love? Had she not loved him for three years? Who could come between them? These last three months were all a dismal dream. To-morrow, facts would reinstate themselves. To-morrow, Henry would come to see her after the sitting of the House, and tell her all his plans for the political future. Had it not

always joyed her to listen to him? And some day, some day, they would be married. Meanwhile, no one should come between them any more. They had been so happy in each other's company. And they would be so yet. . . .

"There has been—an accident?" asked the Countess, naturally alarmed by Juliette's despondent attitude.

"No," replied Juliette, "the duel was fought. Casal is slightly wounded. In a day or two he will doubtless be well again."

"You see that everything has turned out better than we could have hoped! But why are you so sad? What has Poyanne been saying to you?"

"Oh! do not ask me," Juliette moaned; "leave me. It is *you* that have undone me! If you had never made me know *that man*, if you had never drawn him to your house, to mine, if you had never spoken of him as you did, all this had never happened."

Then, seeing tears surge up into poor Gabrielle's eyes, Juliette threw herself into her friend's arms, showing by this angry incoherence the disorder of her soul. There she sobbed like a broken-hearted child. In vain did Gabrielle essay to soothe her, to coax her to tell her all that was upon her mind. The reasons of the profound impression Henry had made upon her friend were all unknown to Gabrielle. She could not comfort her. At last she said:

"Let me now go and get what news there is from Casal's people, and I will come to you again."

Juliette was once more alone with her sad and solemn thoughts. It was not on Casal she brooded, but on Henry Ever in her ears his voice repeated: "*Farewell, my only*

love." What she longed for now was to see him again, to have an opportunity to explain, to speak to him, to hear his well-beloved voice.

Perhaps to lie to him again, to show him some new phase of her duality? Duplicity? The last term was almost implied in the other!

No; all was now told, all curtains between their spirits torn down. Now that he himself had had the courage to formulate those words of rupture she had hesitated even to whisper to herself, was she going to give way to her former madness and recommence those wicked ambiguities?

What asked she, then, of this lover, so devoted to her as to be capable of a superhuman renunciation?

By what mysterious process of the heart did Juliette, having for three months thought of nothing so much as of the happiness of being Raymond's, now long, as never she had longed, for the presence of the one who had but lately seemed the trial and terror of her life?

All that afternoon and evening, almost all that night, these questions pressed for answers, vainly. The time approached for Poyanne's arrival, once again.

One o'clock. Half-past. Two! Half-past two!

He was not with her.

Having a presentiment of some strange, some terrible resolve on the part of De Poyanne, Juliette took carriage for the Rue Martignac, only to learn that the Count had gone out, and that nobody knew anything about his movements. She returned home. He had not arrived. She wrote to him. The servants brought her letter back unopened, for he was away. It was only on the following morning, and after another night of fearful anxieties, that

she received a letter through the post with the well-known handwriting on it. It was with the eagerness of a girl of sixteen, who holds in her hands her first real love-letter, that she tore it open, and read as follows :

"*Five O'Clock, Evening,*
"PASSY.

"DEAR FRIEND : In order to be able more freely to write you what is on my mind, I have come out here, to the old rooms where I spent two happy summers ; to the town in a certain shady alley of which you first promised to be my wife, when the mercy of Heaven should allow us to marry.

"Resuming for the moment, alas ! the memory of that which had been ever my fondest dream, my sacred hope for months and years, of living with you always, of having your soft presence ever by my side to fill my soul with sweetness, I have felt it easier here than it would have been in Paris to tell you, once for all, and for the last time, how greatly your society has compensated for my sad past, relieved many anxieties, how happy it has made me. And to thank you—but I never can sufficiently.

"But oh ! the lover whom death has separated from his sweetheart, and who leans his head against the cold railings of her sepulchre, has not more melancholy in his soul than I have at this hour—I, who am making a pilgrimage in spirit to the burial-place of our fond past—not more melancholy, not more tenderness. . . . Well do I wish that but a little of what I feel may be made apparent to you in these pages, which you will read when I am far, far away from Paris. Well do I wish that you may retain of me the image, not of the man who spoke to you so strangely yesterday, but that of the friend who will ever think of you, who has ever thought of you as I am thinking at this minute, kindly, gently—oh ! so kindly, with inexpressible gratitude for what you have vouchsafed me of your heart. So good have you been to me that even at this moment, in this agony of my farewell, thinking of the months that you have let me love you, I can find nothing sweeter to say than to thank you from the core of my heart, and to thank you evermore.

"Understand, my dearest friend on earth, then, that I am not

ungrateful to you, and that, in going away, as I am about to do, I know—yes, I know—that I am very dear to you, too, and that you have ever told the truth when you declared you could not bear to see me sad or sorry. I know that when you read, as here you do, that I have quitted France for a long, long time, if not forever, you will feel a real, a serious sorrow.

"The struggles you have sustained I feel for and I understand. The internal drama that has played itself out in your soul is so clearly defined to me that I feel at once the extent of the devotion you have experienced for me, and how little that devotion resembles love. And you yourself have reflected in such good faith, when you would not allow this to your conscience. You were proud; you did not wish to recognize that you had changed! You were kind; you did not wish me to be wretched! You were loyal; you would not for one second admit the possibility of your own treason toward one to whom you thought that you were bound for life!

"Alas! Juliette, do not deceive yourself in this; a sentiment that such reasons as these would not quell was a deep-rooted one. I had only to hear your cry yesterday, when you believed the fatal issue of the duel, to see your tears, knowing you so well, to have sufficient evidence. And if I go away, it is because I feel, in face of your new love, that I could not support the sight of all this face to face. Whether you struggle against it, or whether you yield to it, I should know how to interpret your sorrows, and your joys, in your attitude toward me and your spells of silence. And I am only a man, a man who loves you with all his heart, with all his soul, whom you, too, have loved, and from whom you cannot, and you ought not, to demand a superhuman energy. Besides, have I the right, now that all is known to me, to put my woe betwixt you and a new life, this love of mine you do not share, between your conscience and that which may become your happiness? Have I the right to grieve you with the daily sight of a jealousy—I confess it with humility—I am unable to conquer? Have I the right to inflict on you this misplaced and morbid sensibility which you have already suffered from for weeks, for months, perhaps for years? No, Juliette; I perceive too well, in thus reviewing the inner history of our souls, the invincible necessity that two beings who have loved each other, when one has ceased to love, should part. It is most terrible. It is most bitter. It has

the bitterness of death. But self-respect in life is bought at even such a price.

"I have reflected well on all these things and on so many others. In our engagement, hidden by my wilfulness, I know that you have suffered from the necessity of keeping it from the world. It was I that was to blame. If, not being free to love you, I had forever cloaked my fervent passion in shadow and silence, who knows?—He to whom all hearts are known, in His own time, might have recompensed me for the heroic effort by keeping the sources of future tenderness forever open in your soul! Who knows if there be not reserved for some fortunate loves, formed of renunciation, a mysterious grace, similar to the mystic grace of profound faith, which leaves the spirit free at every season to fly upward on the wings of prayer? That which I ask of God in our behalf, is that if any fault of judgment has been shown, it may be visited on me, and not on you.

"That this new friend of yours, by whom your affections have been snatched from me, may become worthy of you, may comprehend the incarnate nobility and beauty that comes to him through so many fiery trials!

"Let me here tell you that a change in this regard has wrought itself in me since yesterday. I spoke to you with infinite hostility of the man in whom, by a weird clairvoyance, I recognized the executioner of my happiness. I cannot think, now, that I was altogether right, nor that a being who was capable of interesting you so greatly as to wake your love could be exactly what I mistook him for. I wished to, I ought, also, to have told you, that I have judged him differently since his letter of apology, so difficult for a man of that kind to write, has proved to me that he was devoted to you, after all, in a better fashion than I thought. And to tell you, now, what I did not mention yesterday, which, to be just, I must relate, he was logical with his letter, for instead of firing at me, he fired in the air! May what I write of him prove an expiation of the passionate rancor that prevented me accepting his excuses! And also give me the right to implore you to reflect long and well before you travel further on the road that you are on! *Study and test the sentiments he cherishes toward you!* He is free, he is young, he is the victim of no past. He can devote his life to you, trans-

form himself beneath your tender, noble influence. If things are thus, I do not say I shall not suffer when I learn that you have thus reconstructed your destiny. But know that this day I love you with a kindness so disinterested, so purified by recent martyrdoms, that I shall find that within me which will recompense me for welcoming this idea of your new life with the peace which Holy Writ speaks of: 'I give you peace, my peace I give unto you, not as the world gives,' the peace of a soul that loves forever, yet renounces love forever.

"And now, adieu, my sweet friend. Adieu! thou who hast been the star in my sky, the spot of blue in a firmament hidden by so many clouds. Farewell, thou that permittedst me to live when I was at the end of my forces, thanks to whom I am able to say this day, 'I have tasted happiness.' Fear no desperate resolve on the part of the man who goes away from you, his heart full of you, in order that you may be happy, that he may never more cost you a single sigh! In my dolorous meditations of last night, I have viewed in front of me what remains of existence, and decided as to its employment. I have recognized, too, in my last trials of politics a warning that I should have to renounce much in public life as well, and that renunciation did not cost me very much. Another field is opening to me, in which I have resolved to use the remainder of what strength I possess. Our private griefs would be surely cruelly useless if they did not lead us to seek oblivion in an impersonal duty, a disinterested devotion to our best ideas. You have known too well my ideas of duty during the happy days when you allowed me to think aloud in your society, that I should now need to say more on this subject, save that I have resolved to go to the *United States* to work on that great book of social philosophy whose ground plan had such interest for you, whose execution supposes studies impossible anywhere but over there, studies that will last for years!

"To-morrow, when these sheets are in your hands, I shall be upon the sea, having for sole horizon only the vast body of the waves that will roll in ever-increasing myriads between us. My letter of resignation to the President of the Chamber is written. As for my affairs, I set them in order on the eve of the duel. Our noble Ludovic Accragne, whose divine charity you know, has charged himself with any arrangements that remain.

"Your name was the first on the lips of that tender friend as soon as I broached my departure. I said to him I had already told you of it, and that you approved. And now it only remains for me to think of you, with a sadness and a tenderness that I can find no words for.

"You will write to me, will you not? But not just yet. Let it be at a time when I can learn all about you without too much suffering.

"You will keep a corner for me in your affection, in your friendship, with which, if I were present, I should scarcely be contented.

"My heart is one so easily wounded: but absence will perhaps cure all that, and will only leave the immortal essence of a sentiment I now sum up: Be happy, even away from me, without me. . . .

"Adieu, once more, angelic friend; remember, sometimes, that you always had my love.

"What more remains to say? save that old kind phrase, so touching always to the loving spirit, which I breathe from my heart of hearts: May God bless and protect you, my own sweet love!

"Henry."

Juliette let these leaves lie in her lap, the leaves on which her sweetheart of so long had imprinted his heart; and her tears began to flow quietly, impossible to check. Henry was there in his entirety, with his forthrightness of thought, which, even in this dread hour of separation, had no room for littleness, for bitterness, for jealousy; with the ardor of an almost religious love, which caused him almost to feel the ecstasy of a martyr under the sufferings of renunciation; with his faith in ideas, so profound that he brought up his grand project of a history of socialism with the *élan* of an apostle, in these pages of adieu to his adored one.

Once more she saw Henry de Poyanne as he was at their first meeting. How strongly she had even then felt that he was not a man of these days, with his character that re-

mained intact before the compromises of a century deadly to the half-way thinker! How delicately he had courted her; with what tenderness had she seen him return to social life, and with what joy!

He had girdled her life with so much regard! With this new gift of freedom, what would she now become? *What was this that she had done?* . . . Even if she now wished to prevent his departure, to protest against this adieu, to refuse this proffered liberty, she was unable to do so. The soft phrases of this supreme message made a new conquest of her being; they gave her back the Henry of the long ago, absorbing, effacing the sentiments of the last three months. This return in full of the whole past, the sole fragile relic of which she held between her hands, could not last forever. It was nevertheless so complete, all day, she had no thoughts save for the absent one, the one who had taken to flight because he loved her so! It was only toward night-fall that she was awakened from this somnambulism in the by-gone years by the entrance of Gabrielle with news of the wounded man. She now reproached herself with having forgotten him, because his sufferings, also, were for her.

"He will be well in a few days," said the Countess. "I trust they won't begin fighting again when he gets about!"

"They will not be able," said Juliette, gloomily. "Read this letter."

And she handed Madame de Candolle the newly tear-stained sheets on which Henry had printed his magnanimous being, which Juliette also, too late, desired her friend to appreciate. She could see the Countess's eyes well up and overflow with sympathetic tears; and it was with a

sister's kiss that Gabrielle cried aloud in her regret and sorrow:

"Heavens! if I had only known this man's grand nature sooner!" And then, with hesitation, handing her back the letter:

"But about Casal, what does he know?"

"He knows all. I told him."

"You?" Gabrielle was lost in thought.

Juliette and Raymond, then, had seen each other since the latter had been at the Rue Tilsitt? They must have talked most confidentially together, if such an avowal was made. Gabrielle saw these fresh signs of them coming to an understanding, and continued:

"If he tries to see you again, now that your engagement with Henry is all over, what will you do? For he is sure to know. The papers are sure to mention the resignation of the Leader and first orator of the Right, and of his voyage to the United States."

"If he tries to see me," said Madame de Tillière, raising herself with her old-time haughtiness. "I will show him the kind of woman he has to deal with!"

So loath was Gabrielle to touch the recent wounds in her dear friend's heart that she asked no explanation of this enigmatic reply, although she was unable to guess its gist. Juliette had compounded, at the long last, with her own conscience by coming to a vague but unalterable decision to have nothing more to say to this man, the source of all her woe and Henry's. Her effort to appear reasonably calm before her mother's penetrating eyes on her return from visiting Casal, all those protracted anxieties about the duel, the terrible progress of the drama of her soul when the Count confronted her with the truth—all these

distresses now appeared to her so many dangers past. The insoluble had been solved by time, and what men vainly christen chance. Her mother was satisfied; the duel had been fought; the drama, thanks to De Poyanne's definitive actions and decision, had progressed far in the final act. Now only remained the last and most redoubtable problem, Raymond Casal. Thus she found herself alone and free, in face of an unknown whom Gabrielle's phrase brought once more to her mind. What course should she pursue?

When the Countess had taken her leave, Juliette searched in a drawer in her escritoire, and pulled out Casal's last letter, the one he had written on the eve of the duel. She reread it with profound sadness; the unavoidable comparison between the tone of that note and Henry's noble letter was doubly bitter now that the latter was so far away. Raymond's light way of addressing her as his "charming friend," with his implied reference to the future terms on which they were to meet, sounded so inexpressibly vulgar! What a contrast to the gentleness and deference that, like a double aureole, ever surrounded De Poyanne! And like a dash of cold water came the thought, What did she really know of this Casal? That he was a man of the world, that he had had many loves, and had been faithful to none, that he had taken a violent fancy to her, and persistently pursued her, even though the chase might have led across her lover's corpse —that was really all she knew about him! The latter knowledge led to a painful revulsion. She remembered now the previous repute of Casal for cynical brutality; and she saw that his recent conduct in picking a quarrel with the Count had not belied it. She trembled, not

alone on account of the still unveiled mysteries of this man's past, but for her own future if she should in any way allow him to assume its mastership. The intensity of emotion she had experienced when she permitted Raymond, for the first and last time, to press his lips to hers, was enough to give her pause, to make her ask herself what use this man would make of his power over her if she should ever make of him the future foreground of her life.

It would be too late to recede, she thought, if she should ever allow Raymond to think again that he could tune her heartstrings to his wish. What if the years of devotion that De Poyanne had squandered at her feet were in Casal's case but a passing whim? It might be so, and it was safer so to view it. That dear one, now tossing on the lonely ocean—with all his soul in his strained westward look, with all his happiness behind him—should never have to say, in what years might come, that she had neglected a caution which, from his parting lips, had all the force of an injunction from the dying!

What now remained for her to do?

. . . . . .

During the few days of respite yielded her by the forced seclusion of Raymond Casal, a project began to form in her mind, the only way of reconciling all the opposing elements of Juliette's soul. It satisfied at one and the same time her heart-hunger to remain worthy of the worship of Poyanne, and her newly discovered wish to show herself she really was not the weak woman, swayed by the veering wind of every new emotion, the events of the last few months had indicated. This project accorded,

also, with the deadly lassitude caused by so many cruel disappointments.

What if she never saw Raymond Casal again?—if, leaving Paris, and forever, before he had time to regain her ear, she sought refuge in her childhood's home and asylum, that dear estate of Nançay, where, in her first great sorrow in 1870, she had already experienced the strange consolations of nature and of solitude?

Raymond would certainly soon know of De Poyanne's departure for America. Would he accept her own flight as final? Would he not now pursue her to her retreat? Well, if he did, she would fly further yet. Once entered on that definite course of estrangement of which Poyanne had set such a brave example, she felt her strength would grow with danger; and she saw, in the far future the sweet haven and the dream sublime of all those souls that have been wrecked for love's dear sake, unique refuge against Raymond Casal and all the world—*the cloister!*

Of the woman who thus rounds off her life in the austerities of a nunnery, under the shadow of the cross, what man can think an unkind, ungenerous thought? And this taking the vow would cost her, half mortified already as her spirit seemed, so little. Betwixt her and the sainted asylum only stood Madame de Nançay.

"But, no; I must not, cannot, quit the world yet, because of dear mamma."

This was an obstacle of which she had not thought. Already it would be hard enough to make her poor mother accept an absolute exile far from dear Paris, and relinquish every hope of still seeing her idolized daughter remarried.

What excuse would, even now, justify this sudden resolution? The fear of this coming interview was so overwhelming that Juliette put it off from morning till evening, from night to day again; and in that state things would have remained had she not, on the afternoon of the fourth day, been compelled to take action by the near approach of Raymond. As she came in from a long and lonely walk in her favorite part of the Bois de Boulogne, she discovered that a *commissionnaire* during her absence had brought in an immense basket of white lilac and red and white roses and mauve-purple orchids, to which was tied a letter, the writing on which seemed to scorch her eyes. Although the characters were altered, as if directed by a hand that held the pen with difficulty, she recognized the writing of Casal. Inclosed, and scribbled on a card, she read:

"The first words I am able to write are to reassure my sweet friend, and to ask her at what hour I may present myself the first time I come out—to-morrow.

"R. C."

. . . . . .

Whilst reading this letter, that had cost its writer such an effort, Juliette breathed the rich aroma of the roses and lilac, whose perfume enveloped her like a cunning caress, while the card she held in her hands seemed to be instinct with an insinuation of mastership.

Instantaneously, and as if she was battling with some dreadful sacrilege, she tore the card into twenty pieces, and threw the butterfly morsels with a sweeping arm out of her open window onto the gravel pathway. Then, having carried the great, sweet basketful of flowers into the open air, where their scent no longer could attack her, she fell

on her knees, with a flood of tears, and prayed the prayers of girlhood.

What drama of more than mortal mystery was outknelled in Juliette's suffering soul during that hour—which was of a surety *the hour of her life?*

Is there, as the instinct of all the ages has supposed, in the prayer of a sorrowful heart which is thus launched spaceward toward the UNKNOWN SPIRIT, the Author of our destiny, a real force of reparation, a chance of obtaining reënforcements for our weakened will?

Was it at this instant that Juliette pronounced, with her conscience for sole witness, the awful vow that, in less than a year, she was destined to fulfil?

When she rose from her knees, her crystal eyes beamed with a strange light, her face was glorified with a new expression. She went at once to seek her mother, who, seeing Juliette thus, as it were, transfigured, was lost in astonishment.

"What is it you wish to tell me with that exalted look of yours?" Having observed her beloved daughter so sad for now so many days, the change alarmed her.

"A resolution that you must approve, mamma, however unreasonable it may seem to you! I start for Nançay to-night."

"But are you mad?" her mother cried. "You forget the doctor has you in his charge, and——"

"Oh! if my health is all that is in doubt!" exclaimed Madame de Tillière; then very gravely, almost with tragic intensity:

"You wish your daughter to be happy?"

"To be happy?" repeated Madame de Nançay, helplessly. Then forcing Juliette into a low chair, and strok-

ing her hair: "Confess yourself to the poor old mother that loves you. Some mad idea has formed inside this pretty head. You have such a knack of spoiling with your dim imaginings a life that *might* have been so happy!"

"No, mamma, these are neither ideas nor imaginings. I love a man whose wife I dare not, cannot, will not be. I feel that if I stay here I am lost. Lost, dost thou hear, my mother?"

"What! It is the departure of the Count Poyanne that has upset you so!" cried Madame de Nançay. "I knew your heart was troubled. I guessed it was for him, and that the dear man went away because he was not free to marry you!"

"Ask me no questions, dearest. I can tell you nothing, give no further explanation. But if you love me, understand this resolution is forced on me by anguish, and promise me that you will not prevent me doing as I wish!"

"Ah! you will never leave me *for a convent?*"

"No; but I wish to retire from Paris—forever, to give up this house forever, never more to set foot in this town Forgive me if I leave to you the details of departure! My things can be sent after me to Nançay, where I will await you, mother."

"Reflect, my child. In a month, in a year, you will be sick to death of solitude and Nançay. These sentiments that rack you now will soon be dead within you. Life in the country, with no other companionship than that of your old mother, will appear to you, will prove, unbearable."

"With thee, my mother, ever with thee, my happiness,

my safety!" cried poor Juliette, letting fall hot tears on the wrinkled hands she kissed so fondly.

"Ah! do not deny me. You love me, wish me leal and good. Help me to save myself."

"Ever with me," sighed Madame de Nançay, with the sobriety of sadness infinite. "And what will become of you, alone in the world, when *I* am no longer with you?"

"When *you* are no longer with me," breathed Juliette, convulsively embracing her mother, "I shall have God."

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